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SC regains full strength with three new judges

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Markets slip on IT stakes drain, weak Asian peers

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Virat will play a big role in the finals: De Villiers

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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5 dead amid rain fury in Coastal K'taka

3 dead in wall collapse after M'luru landslide; Govt allocates Rs 1.2L aid for damaged homes

MANGALURU, 30 MAY

Torrential overnight rains triggered deadly landslides and accidents across Dakshina Kannada district, claiming five lives and injuring several others.

A major landslide struck a home in Montepadavu Kodi near Mangaluru around 4 am on Friday, burying six members of the Poojary family. Among the deceased were two young children—three-year-old Aryan and his two-year-old brother Aarush—and their grandmother, Prema Poojary. Their mother, Ashwini Poojary, was rescued unconscious but critically injured, found clutching her sons under the rubble in a desperate attempt to shield them.

"Ashwini was pleading with rescuers to save her children," said an eyewitness. Her husband, Sitaram, narrowly escaped after sensing the landslide. His father, Kantappa Poojary, sustained injuries but was rescued by locals and hospitalised.

Rescue operations were delayed due to unstable terrain and continued rainfall. Mangaluru Police Commissioner Anupam Agarwal said the collapse of the hillside made access nearly impossible for emergency teams. Although locals claimed the road was clear, officials cited the risk of further landslides. The Mangaluru City Corporation removed 3–4 tonnes of debris before reaching survivors.

The house, registered under Kantappa Poojary, was built with local bricks and cement and stood adjacent to the collapsed hill. In a separate incident on Friday morning in Deralakatte, a compound wall collapsed on a house, killing six-year-old Fatima Naeem.

Meanwhile, in Amar Jalu village, Belthangady taluk, 27-year-old lineman Vijesh Jain died of electrocution while repairing a high-tension line during heavy rain on Thursday. He was the son of Sukumar and Poornima Jain. Rescue efforts by NDRF and SDRF are ongoing. *—Salar News & Agencies*

Premises of a house is inundated with floodwater after heavy rainfall in Mangaluru on Friday **PHOTO: PTI**

2 FISHERMEN IGNORE RED ALERT, DROWN IN SEA

Mangaluru, 30 May

Two fishermen were suspected to have drowned after allegedly venturing into the waters in violation of safety advisories in Dakshina Kannada district, which is under a red alert due to heavy rainfall and sea turbulence, officials said on Friday. Their bodies are yet to be recovered. Search and rescue operations could not be taken up due to the severity of turbulence in the sea, according to the local fishermen from Thota Bengre, despite the men and machinery were ready to launch the operation. The deceased are Yashavanth and Kamalaksha, residents of Thotabengre near Mangaluru, they added. According to local authorities, despite the Indian Meteorological Department issuing a red alert for the region, the two had gone fishing early on Thursday. Remnants of the motorised country craft were washed onto the shore. The district administration had warned residents, particularly those near riverbanks and coastal areas, to stay away from waterbodies in light of the inclement weather. *—PTI*

K'TAKA RECORDS HIGHEST MAY RAINFALL IN 125 YRS

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Friday said, for the first time in the last 125 years, the State has recorded the highest rainfall in the month of May, and 28 districts have received more than usual rainfall.

Addressing the review meeting with Deputy Commissioners of all districts and CEOs of all Zilla Panchayats, he asked them to visit the rain-damaged areas immediately and provide necessary compensation to those affected.

In case the house is completely damaged by rains, immediate compensation of Rs 1.20 lakh is being provided, he said, Assistance should be provided for the construction of houses under various schemes, he added.

"There is no shortage of funds to provide compensation for rain damage. More than Rs 1,000 crore is available under SDRF (State Disaster Response Fund) in the districts," he said . Guidelines have already been issued for providing compensation if houses are damaged due to heavy rain.

In places where landslides are likely, precautionary measures, including evacuation of people should be taken to avoid the possibility of death, Siddaramaiah said. *—PTI*

A farmer sorts cabbages after the produce was damaged due to continuous rains in Chikmagalur **PHOTO: PTI**

Man dies of Covid in Karnataka, death toll now 3

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

A 63-year-old man who tested positive for Covid-19 died at a private hospital in Mysuru, taking the total coronavirus-related death toll in the state to three, officials said on Friday. The deceased, who was admitted to the hospital on 15 May died on 25 May, they said. According to a statement by the health department, the patient died due to septic shock with MODS (Multiple Organ Dysfunction Syndrome), AKI (Acute Kidney Injury) with oliguria, Covid pneumonia with ARDS (Acute Respiratory Distress Syndrome) and Hyponatremia. The patient, it further, stated had comorbidities like CKD (Chronic Kidney Disease) and Bronchiectasis. The health department bulletin pegged active Covid-19 cases at 234 in Karnataka as of 30 May, with 114 new cases reported on Friday. The day also saw a total of 460 tests being done for Covid, including 406 RTPCR and 54 RAT tests. Friday's positivity rate stood at 24.7 per cent and fatality rate at 0.8 per cent.

BJP leader's son gets lifer in Ankita murder case

KOTDWAR, 30 MAY

A court here on Friday sentenced a resort operator and his two employees to rigorous life imprisonment in the 2022 Ankita Bhandari murder case. Bhandari, 19, who worked as a receptionist at Vanantra Resort located in Yamkeshwar of Pauri district, was murdered on 18 September, 2022 by resort operator Pulkit Arya and his two employees Saurabh Bhaskar and Ankit Gupta. Pulkit Arya is the son of former BJP leader Vinod Arya. As soon as the matter came to light, the party showed the door to Vinod Arya. According to the police, on the night of September 18 that year, an altercation occurred between Ankita Pulkit over VIP services. Following a heated confrontation, Ankita was allegedly forced into a vehicle and later pushed into the fast-flowing Cheela canal, a man-made irrigation channel known for its dangerous currents. *—PTI*

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111 DEAD AS FLOODS WIPE OUT NIGERIAN TOWN

ABUJA, 30 MAY

At least 111 people have been confirmed dead after torrential rains triggered severe flooding in Mokwa, a market town in Nigeria's Niger State, officials said on Friday.

The flooding, which began on Thursday, was worsened by the collapse of a dam in a nearby town, according to local reports. Husseini Isah, head of the operations office in Minna, said rescue efforts are ongoing. "The number keeps rising. At the last count, 88 bodies were recovered," he told The Associated Press, though later reports confirmed 111 fatalities. Mokwa, a key trading hub between Nigeria's south and north, has seen large-scale displacement as floodwaters submerged homes and markets. The disaster echoes a similar tragedy in Maiduguri last September, where heavy rains and a dam collapse killed 30 people and displaced millions. Seasonal floods are a recurring threat in Nigeria, particularly along the Niger and Benue Rivers. *—PTI*

2024-25 sees 6.5% GDP, slowest since pandemic

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India's economic growth slowed to 7.4 per cent in the January–March period (Q4), pulling down the annual growth rate for 2024–25 to a four-year low of 6.5 per cent, mainly because of the manufacturing sector, official data showed on Friday.

This is the slowest growth rate since the Covid-19 pandemic year of 2020-'21. In the financial year 2023-'24, the country's real gross domestic product was 9.2 per cent.

The size of the Indian economy rose to Rs 330.68 lakh crore, or about USD 3.9 trillion, and set the stage for achieving the USD 5 trillion target in the next few years.

China has registered an economic growth of 5.4 per cent in the first three months of 2025.

The economic expansion was recorded at 7.4 per cent during January–March 2025, while it was 6.4 per cent in October–December 2024, 5.6 per cent in July–September 2024, and 6.5 per cent in the April–June quarter of the last financial year, according to economic estimates released by the National Statistics Office (NSO).

"Real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 187.97 lakh crore in FY2024–25, against the First Revised Estimates (FRE) of GDP for the FY 2023–24 of Rs 176.51 lakh crore, registering a growth rate of 6.5 per cent. Nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices is estimated to attain a level of Rs 330.68 lakh crore in the FY 2024–25 against Rs 301.23 lakh crore in FY 2023–24, showing a growth rate of 9.8 per cent," NSO said. *—PTI*

Conduct NEET-PG 2025 in one shift, orders SC

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday issued directions that the 15 June post-graduate medical entrance exam be conducted in a single shift, saying that holding it in two shifts "creates arbitrariness".

A bench headed by Justice Vikram Nath directed the authorities to make arrangements for holding NEET-PG 2025 exam in one shift and to ensure that complete transparency is maintained and secured centres are identified.

"Any two question papers can never be said to be having an identical level of difficulty or ease," said the bench, also comprising Justices Sanjay Kumar and NV Anjaria.

It said normalisation may be applied in exceptional cases but not in a routine manner year after year.

The bench passed the order on pleas challenging a notification on holding the NEET-PG 2025 examination in two shifts.

The top court said 2,42,678 candidates have applied for the examination and the test is held all over the country, not in one city.

"We are not ready to accept that in the entire country and considering the technological advancement in the country, the examining body could not find enough centres to hold the examination in one shift," the bench said.

"Holding examinations in two shifts creates arbitrariness and also does not keep all the candidates, who take the examination, at the same level," it observed.

It said the examination is scheduled for 15 June, and the examining body still has more than two weeks to identify more centres to conduct it in one shift.

"We accordingly direct the respondents to make further arrangements for holding the examination in one shift and also ensure that complete transparency is maintained and secured centres are identified," the bench said. *—PTI*

DARSHAN GETS PERMISSION FOR FOREIGN TRAVEL

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

A Bengaluru trial court on Friday granted permission to Kannada actor Darshan Thoogudeepa to travel abroad for film shooting between 1 July and 27 July.

The 57th City Civil and Sessions Court had earlier reserved its order on Wednesday.

Darshan, currently out on conditional bail, had approached the court under Section 439(1)(b) of the Criminal Procedure Code, seeking approval to travel to Dubai and Europe.

The actor is the second accused in the murder case of his fan Renukaswamy, allegedly involving his partner Pavithra and 15 others. The Special Public Prosecutor strongly opposed the petition, arguing that if Darshan is allowed to leave the country, there is a serious risk he may not return, potentially derailing the trial proceedings. *—PTI*

AFTER TURKEY BACKS PAK

Govt asks IndiGo to end pact with Turkish airlines

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

In a significant move following Turkey's support for Pakistan during Operation Sindoor, the Indian government has directed IndiGo to terminate its aircraft lease agreement with Turkish Airlines within three months.

Aviation regulator Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) on Friday granted a one-time, final extension until 31 August, 2025, for IndiGo's damp lease of two Boeing 777-300ER aircraft from Turkish Airlines. The extension aims to avoid abrupt flight disruptions that would inconvenience passengers. IndiGo had requested a six-month extension, which was denied.

The decision follows the revocation of security clearance for Turkish ground-handling firm Celebi Aviation on 15 May by aviation security regulator BCAS, citing "national security" concerns. Celebi had operations at nine major Indian airports, including Delhi.

The move also comes amid heightened diplomatic tensions after Turkey condemned India's recent counter-terror strikes in Pakistan. Several travel portals and associations have since issued advisories urging citizens to avoid travel to Turkey. Currently, the leased Turkish aircraft are used for IndiGo's direct flights from Delhi and Mumbai to Istanbul. DGCA has explicitly instructed IndiGo not to seek any further extensions beyond the current deadline. *—PTI*

KAMAL 'NOT SORRY' OVER KANNADA REMARK; STATE BANS 'THUG LIFE'

BENGALURU/CHENNAI, 30 MAY

The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) banned the release of Kamal Haasan starrer 'Thug Life' over the actor's controversial remark about Kannada during the audio launch of the movie in Chennai last week.

KFCC representative Sa Ra Govindu said that they stand firm with Karnataka Rakshana Vedike and other Kannada organisations. The controversy stems from Haasan stating that "Kannada is born out of Tamil". In response, Haasan said he won't apologise when he's not wrong. "It is a democracy. I believe in law and justice. My love for Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala is true. I've been threatened earlier too, and if I am wrong, I would apologise, if I'm not, I won't," Hassan said outside the DMK headquarters. *—PTI*

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US SC ALLOWS TRUMP TO DEPORT 5 LAKH MIGRANTS

WASHINGTON, 30 MAY

Supreme Court on Friday again cleared the way for Trump administration to strip temporary legal pro-tections from hundreds of thousands of immigrants, pushing total number of people who could be newly exposed to deportation to nearly 1 million. The justices lifted a lower-court order that kept humanitarian parole protections in place for over 5migrants from Cuba, Haiti, Nicaragua and Venezuela. The court has also allowed the administration to revoke temporary legal status from about 3,50,000 Vene-zuelan migrants in another case. President Donald Trump promised on campaign trail to deport millions of people. *—PTI*

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DKS: BJP is stirring the pot in Dakshina Kannada

Parameshwara says DGR has wanted to resign for a while

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Asserting that the government will bring the situation in the coastal region, especially Dakshina Kannada, under control, State Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar on Friday accused the BJP and other organisations of indulging in provocations.

"The BJP and several organisations are provoking things in Karnataka. They should understand who is at loss. The loss is for Karnataka and Dakshina Kannada district. People are migrating. Already, youth are going out as they are not getting jobs. We are trying to create jobs," Shivakumar said.

"I'm also sending a team from our party. Our team will meet people (tomorrow) from all sections and submit a report. There is worry, but our government is committed to controlling it in every way," he added.

Meanwhile, Home Minister G Parameshwara said that the government has taken the violent incidents seriously. "The situation was unavoidable (so we had) to transfer some officers."

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar *PHOTO: PTI*

Noting that he had discussed with the Director General of Police regarding the deployment of the newly formed 'Anti- Communal Force', Parameshwara said, "from today the work will start on structuring and then they will be deployed in Dakshina Kannada, Udupi and Shivamogga districts, and strict instructions will be given on maintaining peace."

Assuring action against those making instigative and hate speeches, he said posts on social media will be controlled. He also indicated about transfers of more officials in the days ahead.

Asked about Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao reportedly expressing his wish step down as district in-charge of Dakshina Kannada, Parameshwara said, "He has been saying this from the beginning, not after the current incident. He has been saying that someone from that part of the State should be made in-charge."

Meanwhile, Rao said, "We want people from all religions, castes and sections to live peacefully together. But some people want to do politics. I have called a meeting of officials tomorrow in Mangaluru".

Rejecting reports that he doesn't have a free hand as the district in-charge minister, Rao said he is working taking everyone along. "My responsibility is to ensure peace. I have made honest efforts and will continue to do so." *—PTI*

KFCC bans Kamal Haasan's 'Thug Life' from releasing

Kannada activists burn effigy and protest against actor Kamal Hasan for his remarks on Kannada language at Freedom Park in Bengaluru on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

BENGALURU/CHENNAI
30 MAY

The Karnataka Film Chamber of Commerce (KFCC) banned the release of Kamal Haasan starrer 'Thug Life' over the actor's controversial remark about Kannada.

During a media interaction in City on Friday, KFCC representative Sa Ra Govindu said that they stand firm with Karnataka Rakshana Vedike and other Kannada organisations.

"When there is pressure, I have to do it. Whatever they (Karnataka Rakshana Vedike) say, we should do it," he said. "We will surely not release the film. We stand with Rakshina Vedike and other Kannada organisations."

> **Now he has become a politician. So, to increase his value (politically) and for publicity, he made a controversial statement. He ate here, he drank water here. That he forgot.... Tamil, Telugu, Kannada, Malayalam are not different**
>
> -Shobha Karandlaje, Union Minister

The controversy stems from Haasan stating that "Kannada is born out of Tamil".

In response, Haasan said he won't apologise when he's not wrong.

"It is a democracy. I believe in law and justice. My love for Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala is true. Nobody will suspect it except for those who have an agenda. I've been threatened earlier too, and if I am wrong, I would apologise, if I'm not, I won't," Hassan said outside the DMK headquarters.

Meanwhile, an FIR was registered against a Kannada activist for allegedly burning posters of Haasan.

According to the police, on 28 May at around 11.45pm, Ravikumar, President of Namma Karunada Yuva Sene, gathered near Pavitra Paradise Circle, Basaveshwaranagar and started burning posters of Haasan. *—PTI/ANI*

MANGO MELA

Visitors revel during the inaugural day of mango and jackfruit Mela organised by the Department of Horticulture at Lalbagh in Bengaluru, on Wednesday *PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD*

HMT case: 4 officers likely to be suspended

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Forest, Ecology and Environment Minister Eshwar B Khandre revealed that action has been recommended against two retired IAS and IFS officers and two IFS officers in the case Hindustan Machine Tools (HMT) case. The case is related to the denotification of 280 acres forest land worth over Rs 14,000 crore owned by HMT.

Khandre said that the land was not converted for non-forest purposes. Hence, according to multiple Supreme Court judgments and the Forest Conservation Act of 1980, it remained a forest land. The land was being used for various commercial activities.

He said that the officers had submitted the interlocutory application (IA) without informing the then forest minister and the high-level committee formed.

Additional Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, R Gokul had written to the CBI claiming he was being made a scapegoat for having earlier penalised ruling party MLAs in the Belikeri case. However, Khandre dismissed these allegations.

Khandre recommended the suspension of Gokul, departmental inquiry and actions against the others. *—Salar News*

4 AI MISSIONS LAUNCHED FOR THE DIFFERENTLY-ABLED

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

The Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities on Friday launched four digital and technology missions to aid persons with disabilities in receiving government and societal services in the areas of education, healthcare, livelihood and everyday life.

PHOTO: AI

The missions are being implemented in collaboration with the Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India, the department said.

Department Secretary Rajesh Aggarwal launched the Mission AI Accessibility, Implementation of AI in Assistive Technology and Tools for Empowering People with Disabilities, National Disability Support AI Chat Bot and Unified Benefits Interface – all modelled on the widespread and popular UPI financial technological tool – at the national conference on AI for Empowering Persons with Disabilities.

"We are extending this digital footprint for persons with disabilities by digitalising and automating a series of government benefits, schemes and policies," said Aggarwal. *—PTI*

Siddaramaiah to monitor dvpt from 'CM Dashboard'

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah launched The 'Chief Minister's Dashboard' (CM Dashboard), a platform that provides real-time, integrated insights into key development indicators across the State on Friday.

It was launched during the review meeting with Deputy Commissioners (DCs) of all districts and CEOs of all Zilla Panchayats at Vidhana Soudha, the seat of the State legislature and Secretariat.

The dashboard, developed in-house by the Centre for e-Governance (CeG), is now functionally complete and hosted under the domain cmdashboard.karnataka.gov.in. This platform provides real-time, integrated insights into key development indicators across the State, enabling data-driven governance and decision-making at the highest level, an official release said.

The dashboard is built using a microservices-based architecture, ensuring scalability and ease of integration, and the data is integrated via APIs (Application Programming Interface) from various departments, eliminating manual entry.

The dashboard categorises State performance data into four primary sectors: Economic Growth (e.g., investments, beneficiaries), Legal/ Judiciary Management (e.g., RTI, Sakala case disposals), Infrastructure Development (e.g., roads, irrigation, renewable energy), and Citizen-Centric Governance (e.g., Guarantee Schemes, Janaspandana), officials said.

Designed to promote transparency, the portal displays real-time progress metrics and enables public access to key schemes and service outcomes, they said.

Concerned over child marriage

Siddaramaiah questioned the 700 child marriage cases in a year, and 1,395 Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act (POCSO) cases this year, expressing concerns over "anti-constitutional and anti-people" forces becoming active in the State.

He pulled up the DCs in the meeting, saying they are the district level peace committee presidents, and that preventive measures should be taken to maintain peace, instead of doing post-mortems. "What is the problem in taking preventive measures?"

Questioning why child marriage do not come to the notice of the DCs, Siddaramaiah asked why their subordinates weren't reporting to them. "If your subordinates do not tell you, it means that you are not efficient. You have no control.

"How is it that 700 child marriages are happening even after so many years of independence?.. It has come to my attention that even the FIR has not been registered in some places." he continued. "There are laws and regulations to prevent child marriage. However, they have not been used effectively in some places." *—PTI*

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah with DCM DK Shivakumar during a meeting with DCs and CEOs at Vidhana Soudha, in Bengaluru, on Friday *PHOTO:*

BJP PROTESTS JAN AUSHADHI CENTRES CLOSURE IN MYSURU

MYSURU, 30 MAY

BJP activists protested at KR Hospital on Friday, condemning the government's move to shut down Pradhan Mantri Jan Aushadhi Kendras (generic medicine centres) within state-run hospitals.

Led by Krishnaraja MLA T S Srivatsa and former MLA L Nagendra, the protesters held placards and raised slogans against the government, accusing it of vindictive politics and targeting Prime Minister Modi's welfare initiatives.

The BJP leaders warned that closing these affordable medicine centres, a vital lifeline for poor patients, would spark statewide agitation. While the government cited policy violations for the closures within hospital premises, over 8,900 centres outside hospital grounds may continue to operate. Protesters urged the government to reverse the decision immediately. *—Salar News*

LITERARY WORLD IMPOVERISHED

Kannada poet Venkatesha Murthy dies

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

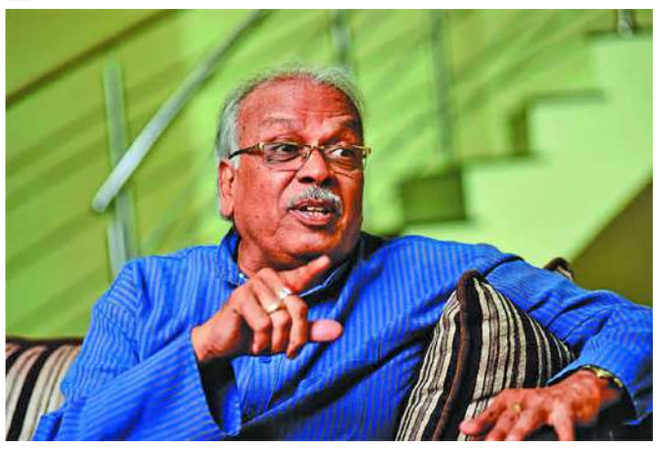
Acclaimed Kannada poet and playwright HS Venkatesha Murthy, widely known as 'HSV', died at a private hospital here on Friday, sources said.

Murthy was 80. He had been suffering from age-related ailments. He is survived by four sons.

He was a prolific writer, who contributed significantly to Kannada literature as an essayist, playwright, novelist, children's literature author, translator, critic, poet, and film song-story-dialogue writer.

Murthy dedicated more than three decades to teaching at St. Joseph's Commerce College in City.

Murthy's poetry is well-known in the State and frequently sung in popular sugama sangeeta or Bhavageethe (musical genre in which poetry in the Kannada language is set to music) stages. He also penned lyrics for films such as 'Chinnari Mutha', 'America America' and 'Kirik Party' among others. His major plays include 'Uriya Uyyale', 'Agnivarna' and 'Manthare'.



HS Venkatesha Murthy died at 80. He taught at St Joseph's Commerce College for more than 3 decades *PHOTO: X*

Murthy is a recipient of many awards and accolades and was the president of the 85th All India Kannada Sahitya Sammelana held in Kalaburagi.

He held a Doctorate of Literature for his research on 'Kannadadalli Kathana Kavanagalu'.

Mourning Murthy's demise, the State government issued a notification ordering that his last rites be performed with full police honours. Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said Venkatesha Murthy was a distinguished writer with a vast readership and has left the literary world "impoverished" by his departure.

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar condoled the poet's death and noted that he enriched Kannada literature through his Bhavageethe. "A heartfelt farewell to the poet of emotions," he said in a post on X. *—PTI*

IndiGo signs deal with BIAL for MRO facility

BENGALURU, 30 MAY

IndiGo has announced an initial agreement with Bangalore International Airport Ltd (BIAL) to establish a maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility at Bengaluru International Airport. The new facility will occupy approximately 31 acres and will enhance IndiGo's capability to maintain both narrow-body and wide-body aircraft, supporting the airline's growing fleet, according to a company statement.

IndiGo's CEO, Pieter Elbers, emphasised that this partnership signifies a strategic move towards developing the airline's maintenance capabilities while reinforcing Bengaluru's position as a key aviation hub. He stated, "This collaboration is a pivotal step towards building a significant global presence for IndiGo and India."

BIAL's MD and CEO, Hari Marar, welcomed the agreement, highlighting the long-term relationship between the two organisations and the prospects for growth at KIA. He expressed gratitude to the State government for its support in facilitating the collaboration.

In addition to the MRO facility, the initial pact includes plans for broader cooperation in network expansion, infrastructure development, and joint marketing initiatives. *—PTI*

Maharashtra's Usmanabad Station renamed Dharashiv

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The Usmanabad Railway Station in central Maharashtra has been renamed as `Dharashiv.' Its new station code is DRSV. The Maharashtra government has already changed the name of Osmanabad city and district (locally pronounced as `Usmanabad') as Dharashiv. "The new station name and code have been approved by the Indian Railways Conference Association," a railway official said. To implement the name change, the Mumbai Passenger Reservation System will be temporarily shut down for the public from 11.45pm to 01.30am on June 1. Osmanabad/ Usmanabad was named for a 20th century ruler of the princely state of Hyderabad. Dharashiv is the name of an 8th century cave complex in the area. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

TMC MP to apologise in Lakshmi Puri case

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

TMC MP Saket Gokhale has agreed to issue an unconditional apology in a defamation case filed by former diplomat Lakshmi Murdeshwar Puri. The Delhi High Court had earlier ordered Gokhale to apologise and pay Rs 50 lakh in damages for allegedly making defamatory remarks about Puri's financial affairs on social media. Gokhale's appeal against the July 2024 ruling is pending, but the court refused to stay the requirement to publish the apology. It allowed a temporary stay only on the damages. The court had earlier warned of civil detention for non-compliance, criticising Gokhale for mocking judicial authority. The apology must be published on Gokhale's X handle and in a leading newspaper, as directed in May 2025. *—PTI*

Name Navi Mumbai Airport as DB Patil: Panel

THANE, 30 MAY

With operations at the Navi Mumbai International Airport expected to begin later this year, an all-party action committee has renewed its demand to name the facility after late leader DB Patil. Committee chairman Dashrath Patil warned of a potential "explosion of discontent" if the demand is not met. DB Patil, a former MP, had led protests against land acquisition in Panvel decades ago. Despite a resolution passed by both houses of the Maharashtra legislature, the proposal remains pending with the Centre. Patil urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to meet the committee and finalise the name. He also demanded job priority at the airport for affected residents. *—PTI*

BJP MLC says Uddhav guilty of ₹1,300K cr scam

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

BJP MLC Prasad Lad on Friday alleged corruption worth Rs 1,300 crore in the desilting of Mumbai's Mithi River, primarily during Uddhav Thackeray's tenure as Chief Minister. He claimed an FIR names 16 individuals over suspected irregularities totalling Rs 6.2 million in recent years, with potential fraud stretching back 15 years. Lad suggested Aaditya Thackeray's involvement, without naming him directly. He criticised BMC for inflated billing, misuse of foreign technologies, and awarding contracts to unqualified firms. He also questioned silt dumping records and missing retaining walls funded by a Rs 130 million central grant. The Economic Offences Wing is probing, and Lad says the Enforcement Directorate may take over. He submitted documents to Mumbai's Police Commissioner. *—PTI*

Terror like serpent, will trample it: PM in Bihar

Modi inaugurates underground section of Kanpur metro project

KARAKAT, 30 MAY

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday likened terror to a serpent, saying, "if it raises its hood again, it will be dragged out of its hole and trampled", and asserted that the Indian armed forces have reduced to rubble the hideouts of those who had masterminded the Pahalgam attack, sitting in Pakistan.

Addressing a rally in Bihar's Karakat, around 140 km from the state capital, the Prime Minister said Operation Sindoor was "just an arrow in the quiver" of India and reiterated that the fight against terror was "neither over, nor has it come to a halt".

Recalling his rally in Madhubani district last month, he said, "I had come to Bihar a day after the dastardly attack in Pahalgam, where many of our sisters had lost their husbands. I had promised that the perpetrators would get a punishment that they could not even dream of. Today, I am back in Bihar, after having delivered on the promise."

The enemy must realise that Operation Sindoor was "just an arrow in our quiver. The war on terror is neither over nor has it come to a halt", he asserted. The PM's averment assumes significance in the backdrop of criticism from some opposition parties that the government agreed to a "ceasefire" under pressure from the Donald Trump administration in the US.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets the family members of Pahalgam terror attack victim Shubham Dwivedi, in Kanpur, on Friday *PHOTO: PTI*

Meanwhile, on Friday Modi inaugurated the new underground section of the Kanpur metro rail project from Chunniganj to Kanpur Central.

This section includes five new underground stations -- Chunniganj, Bada Chauraha, Naveen Market, Nayaganj and Kanpur Central.

Additionally, two new railway bridges from the Panki power plant to Kalyanpur were also inaugurated.

He inaugurates 15 projects worth Rs 47,600 cr in Kanpur. *—PTI*

Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh speaks during an interaction with naval warriors aboard aircraft carrier INS Vikrant off Goa *PHOTO: PTI*

Pak must handover Saeed, Azhar for peace talks: Rajnath

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh has issued a stern warning to Pakistan, stating it must hand over UN-designated terrorists Hafiz Saeed and Masood Azhar to India if it is genuinely interested in diplomatic talks. Speaking to naval personnel aboard the aircraft carrier INS Vikrant off Goa, Singh emphasised the consequences Pakistan could face if it continues its "dangerous game" of terrorism, which he claimed has persisted since Independence. Singh asserted that if Pakistan engages in any "evil or unethical" actions against India, the Indian Navy will respond decisively. He noted that the world now acknowledges India's right to defend its citizens from terrorism, asserting that no force could prevent India from doing so. Highlighting the Indian Navy's significant role during Operation Sindoor, Singh explained how its presence restrained the Pakistani military while the Indian Air Force targeted terror bases across the border. He declared Operation Sindoor to be an aggressive campaign against terrorism, stating, "We will use every method against terrorism that Pakistan can think of, and also those it cannot even imagine."Singh urged Pakistan to take heed of this message, suggesting that it should eradicate "nurseries of terrorism" on its soil. *—PTI*

Amit Shah *PHOTO: PTI*

BSF DESTROYED 118 PAK POSTS, SECURITY SYSTEM

POONCH, 30 MAY

Union Home Minister Amit Shah praised the Border Security Force (BSF) for destroying over 118 Pakistani forward posts during Operation Sindoor, dealing a severe blow to Pakistan's surveillance capabilities. He said the BSF dismantled Pakistan's entire surveillance system, which could take years to rebuild, crippling their ability to wage information-based warfare. Shah commended the BSF's vigilance and precise pre-emptive action, emphasising their patriotism and sacrifice. Visiting Poonch, he met troops and civilians affected by shelling, highlighting the BSF as India's first line of defence. He expressed national pride in the force's bravery and unwavering dedication along the border. *—PTI*

BJP trashes Didi over 'is PM every woman's husband' barb

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has condemned West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee for her remarks aimed at Prime Minister Narendra Modi, labelling her language inappropriate for a politician. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra sharply criticized Banerjee for questioning, "Is PM Modi the husband of every woman?" arguing that such language is unacceptable for any elected representative.

Patra pointed out that while Modi serves as a "sewak" (servant) to the public, he is seen as a father figure to some and a brother to others. In a broader attack on the Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader, he accused her of providing refuge to Bangladeshi infiltrators and Rohingyas.

The BJP also dismissed as "fake news" reports suggesting that the party intends to distribute vermilion (sindoor) among women to celebrate the government's anniversary. Patra stressed that these claims were part of a propaganda campaign by opposition parties intended to undermine India's military actions against terrorism.

Banerjee had countered Modi's criticism the day before, asserting, "Every woman has respect; they accept sindoor only from her husband," implying that Modi should respect women's dignity. She accused the Centre of politicising military operations for electoral gains and derisively remarked that Modi has moved from being a tea-seller to a "chowkidar" and now attempting to "sell sindoor."

BJP's IT head, Amit Malviya, echoed the sentiment, branding the reports as false. Meanwhile, Congress spokesperson Supriya Shrinate claimed the BJP retreated from its plans following backlash, criticising the party for its attempts to shift the narrative. *—PTI*

Mamata Banerjee, Sambit Patra *PHOTO: PTI*

MINISTRY OF HEAVY INDUSTRIES RECEIVE BOMB THREAT EMAIL

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The secretary of the Ministry of Heavy Industries received an e-mail on Friday threatening to blow up Udyog Bhawan, housing several central departments, sending the security apparatus into intense action, officials said.

The e-mail threatened to blow up the building near the Central Secretariat using an improvised explosive device (IED) was received in the noon, prompting security officials to evacuate the premises by 3.15pm.

Police said that the threat e-mail was sent to senior officials of the ministry, headquartered in Udyog Bhawan.

Meanwhile, The nine-floor Haryana civil secretariat building was evacuated on Friday afternoon after a bomb threat received on email. Personnel of the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and police were combing the premises, officials said.

The alert about the bomb threat was sounded by the Haryana CID, they said.*—PTI*

Tharoor irked by Columbia's condolences to Pak

BOGOTA/ JOHANNESBURG, 30 MAY

Congress MP Shashi Tharoor, leading an all-party delegation in Columbia, voiced deep disappointment over the nation offering condolences for the loss of lives in Pakistan during Operation Sindoor.

At a media briefing in Bogota, Colombia's capital on Thursday, Tharoor elaborated India's position on terrorism, spoke about Operation Sindoor.

"I have to say that we were a little disappointed in the reaction of the Colombian government, which apparently expressed heartfelt condolences on the loss of lives in Pakistan after the Indian strikes, rather than sympathising with the victims of terrorism," he said.

Tharoor added that his delegation is here to clear the air and explain India's stance to Colombia- how India exercised its right to self-defence.

Shashi Tharoor *PHOTO: PTI*

Meanwhile, An all-party Indian delegation has received widespread backing for its terrorism combat strategy during a visit to South Africa and Saudi Arabia. Led by NCP MP Supriya Sule, the delegation highlighted India's zero-tolerance approach to terrorism, particularly following the 22 April Pahalgam attack. Sule reported productive discussions with South African political leaders, who expressed solidarity with India's stance on combating terrorism.

The delegation also conducted a fruitful visit to Saudi Arabia, reaffirming the shared commitment between India and Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism. BJP MP Baijayant Jay Panda noted the importance of bilateral relations and India's ongoing diplomatic efforts to counter cross-border terrorism. He stated that the Saudi leadership condemned recent attacks and stood firmly with India.

Additionally, the Indian delegation is set to visit various countries, including Latvia and Indonesia, to further push India's message against terrorism and strengthen international collaboration. Members of the delegation have reiterated that India is open to dialogue only if Pakistan takes concrete steps to eliminate terrorism. The global outreach efforts aim to underline need for united action against terrorism, showcasing India's resolve to maintain peace and security. *—PTI*

Pak PM draws 'red line' over Indus in int'l meet

ISLAMABAD, 30 MAY

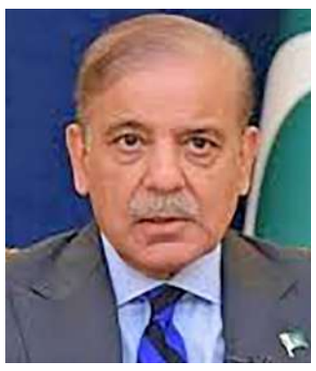
Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on Friday rejected the "weaponisation of water" and warned that Pakistan would not allow India to cross the red line by holding the Indus Waters Treaty in abeyance and endangering millions of lives for narrow political gains.

Sharif was addressing a three-day International Conference on Glaciers' Preservation in Tajikistan's capital Dushanbe when he raked up the issue of India-Pakistan bilateral Indus Water Treaty (IWT).

"India's unilateral and illegal decision to hold in abeyance the Indus Waters Treaty, which governs the sharing of the Indus Basin's water, is deeply regrettable," Dawn reported quoting Sharif.

"Millions of lives must not be held hostage for narrow political gains, and Pakistan will not allow this. We will never allow the red line to be crossed," the Prime Minister told the conference attended by over 2,500 delegates from 80 UN member states and 70 international organisations.

The event is being hosted by the Tajikistan government in collaboration with the UN, UNESCO, World Meteorological Organisation (WMO), the Asian Development Bank, and other key partners. *—PTI*



Shehbaz Sharif *PHOTO: PTI*

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and LoP Rahul Gandhi with Assam leaders in New Delhi *PHOTO: PTI*

KHARGE, RAHUL MEET ASSAM CONG LEADERS TO DISCUSS POLL STRATEGY

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge and former party Chief Rahul Gandhi met leaders from Assam on Friday to discuss strategy ahead of the Assembly polls in the state next year and expressed hope that the party will oust the Himanta Biswa Sarma government.

This is the first meeting of the top Congress leadership with the party's Assam unit after a change of guard in the northeastern state, with the appointment of Gaurav Gogoi as the new party Chief.

Sources said both Kharge and Gandhi urged the leaders to work with unity, strength and coordination to win the hearts of people in order to oust the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government from power in the state.

They termed the government Assam "arrogant and corrupt".

All India Congress Committee general secretary KC Venugopal and general secretary in-charge for A ssam Jitendra Singh were also present at the party's new Indira Bhawan headquarters here. Gandhi shared pictures from the meeting on Facebook. *—PTI*

TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE

RS MPs to get latest smart TV, projector & wearables

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Members of the Rajya Sabha can now have access to the latest gadgets like smart TVs, smart projectors, wearables and other gadgets to equip them to discharge their duties well.

The decision was taken during a recent meeting.

Under the Provision Of Computer Equipment (Members Of Rajya Sabha And Officers) Rules, 2008 of the 'Scheme of Financial Entitlement of Members of Rajya Sabha for Computer Equipment', members of the Rajya Sabha are entitled to receive equipment, which are expected to boost their performance.

The financial entitlement of a member for purchasing computer gadgets and software be governed by different criteria like - Rs 2,00,000 entitlement if a member is elected/nominated to Rajya Sabha for a term of more than three years and Rs 1,50,000 if elected/nominated to Rajya Sabha in a by-election on a casual vacancy for a term of three years or less. An additional amount of Rs 1,00,000 would be available to a member after a period of three years of their term, subject to the condition that the minimum period of term left is not less than six months.

The entitlement is Rs 2,00,000 for a term of 3 years or more *PHOTO: PTI*

Under the financial entitlement scheme, MPs can owe latest gadgets like smart TVs and smart displays, smart projectors and portable projector screens, tablet computers and keyboards and smart speakers and smartwatches. They can also purchase anti-virus software, speakers, headphone, microphone, WebCam and bluetooth headset/AirPods.

—Salar News with Agencies

INDIA WON'T GIVE IN TO NUCLEAR BLACKMAIL: EAM

VADODARA, 30 MAY

External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar on Friday asserted that India will never give in to nuclear blackmail, and those who "sponsor, nurture and utilize" terrorism should be made to pay a heavy price.

Speaking at a convocation ceremony of foreign students of Parul University, a private varsity in Gujarat, he commented that it has become a "fashion in some quarters to openly become transactional" in international relations.

Times have changed, and epicentres of terrorism are no longer "immune" (to retaliation), Jaishankar said.

"We will never give in to nuclear blackmail and whatever decisions are to be taken in India's national interest are taken and will continue to be taken," he asserted. As India responded to the Pahalgam terror attack, it was "heartening to witness the understanding from other nations of our right to defend ourselves," he said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

5 killed in Punjab firecracker factory blast

CHANDIGARH, 30 MAY

Five people were killed and nearly 30 others injured in a blast in a firecracker manufacturing and packaging unit near a village in Lambi in Punjab's Sri Muktsar Sahib district, police said on Friday. Around 50 workers were reportedly present in the building when the blast occurred at 1am.

The blast took place in the two-storey factory unit located on Singhewala-Kotli road in Sri Muktsar Sahib on the Punjab–Haryana border, Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) Jaspal Singh said, adding that migrant labourers worked at the unit. The injured were taken to hospitals, including AIIMS Bathinda, and most of them were stated to be out of danger. *—PTI*

UP women gives birth under phone lights, probe on

BALLIA, 30 MAY

An investigation has been initiated after reports emerged that four women delivered babies under the light of mobile phones at a government health centre in Beruarbari, Uttar Pradesh, on Monday night. Chief medical officer Sanjeev Barman confirmed that a three-member committee has been formed to probe the incident. Preliminary findings indicate that the health centre's transformer had malfunctioned three days prior, despite the presence of a generator and diesel for backup. Neetu Devi, Manju Devi, Pinky Devi and Razia Khatun endured this distressing situation due to the lack of proper lighting. Barman has assured that strict action will follow based on the inquiry's findings to ensure accountability for this unfortunate lapse in healthcare provisions. *—PTI*

1 killed, 8 missing as vehicle plunges into Sikkim's river

GANGTOK, 30 MAY

A tourist vehicle plunged into the Teesta river in North Sikkim's Mangan district, killing one and injuring two. Eight people are missing. The accident occurred on the night of 29 May, with the vehicle falling over 1,000 feet from the Lachen-Lachung highway. Rescue operations commenced immediately, and two individuals were rescued. Sikkim's Chief Minister Prem Singh Tamang expressed his sorrow in a Facebook post, addressing the victims and their families during this difficult time. He stated that dedicated teams from police, ITBP, medical personnel, and local volunteers were involved in ongoing rescue efforts, with NDRF teams joining the search. Tourists have been advised to avoid travel on the dangerous route. *—PTI*

Rape accused released on namesake's bail

FARIDABAD, 30 MAY

Two prisoners having the same names led to a confusion among officials of Faridabad's Neemka Jail, leading to the release of the Nitesh Pandey who is accused of multiple rape of a minor boy instead of the Nitesh Pandey who was charged with trespassing. A search is underway to nab the rape accused The released Nitesh Pandey, 27, son of Ravinder Pandey, was arrested on October 2021 for raping a nine-year-old boy in Faridabad. The second Nitesh Pandey, 24, son of Ravinder Pandey, was arrested on 25 May on charges of house trespass and assault. He was granted bail 25 May by the Faridabad Chief Judicial Magistrate. The jail administration claimed that Nitesh Pandey managed to obtain his release on faking his identity. *—PTI*

SC regains full strength with three new judges

CJI BR Gavai administered the oath of office to the judges

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Chief Justice of India BR Gavai on Friday administered the oath of office to Justices NV Anjaria, Vijay Bishnoi and AS Chandurkar as judges of the Supreme Court.

The CJI administered the oath to the judges at a ceremony in apex court premises.

With the swearing in of the judges, the top court will regain its full working strength of 34 judges, including the CJI.

The Supreme Court collegium recommended the appointment of Karnataka High Court Chief Justice Anjaria, Gauhati High Court Chief Justice Bishnoi and Bombay High Court judge Justice Chandurkar as judges of the top court.

Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal announced their appointment on X.

Their names were recommended against the three existing vacancies of judges in the top court following the superannuation of ex-CJI Sanjiv Khanna and Justices Abhay S Oka and Hrishikesh Roy.

Justice Anjaria had taken oath as the Chief Justice of Karnataka High Court on February 25, 2024.

Earlier, he was elevated as additional judge of Gujarat High Court in November, 2011 and confirmed as permanent judge in September, 2013.

He earlier conducted matters involving constitutional issues and all categories of civil cases, labour and service in the Gujarat High Court.

Justice Bishnoi took oath as the Chief Justice of the Gauhati High Court in February, 2024.

He was appointed additional judge of the Rajasthan High Court in January, 2013 and took oath as a permanent judge of the high court in January, 2015.

Justice Chandurkar shifted to Nagpur in 1992 and practised in various courts. He was elevated as an additional judge of the Bombay High Court in June, 2013. *—PTI*

Chief Justice of india BR Gavai administers the Oath of office to justice AS Chandurkar during his swearing-in as Supreme court judge in New Delhi **PHOTO: PTI**

Proceedings against YouTuber for defamatory remarks against SC

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Supreme Court on Friday initiated suo motu contempt proceedings against Chandigarh-based journalist and YouTuber Ajay Shukla for defamatory remarks against apex court judges in a video on his channel. A bench led by Chief Justice BR Gavai ordered the video's immediate removal and barred the channel from republishing such content. Shukla, editor-in-chief of Varprad Media, was issued a notice. The court stressed that freedom of speech is subject to reasonable restrictions, especially to protect the judiciary's reputation. *—PTI*

3 get lifer in Ankita's murder

KOTDWAR , 30 MAY

A court here on Friday sentenced a resort operator and his two employees to rigorous life imprisonment in the 2022 Ankita Bhandari murder case.

Bhandari, 19, who worked as a receptionist at Vanantra Resort located in Yamkeshwar of Pauri district, was murdered on 18 September, 2022 by resort operator Pulkit Arya and his two employees Saurabh Bhaskar and Ankit Gupta.

Additional District and Sessions Judge Reena Negi also imposed a fine of Rs 50,000 on all three convicts, prosecution lawyer Ajay Pant said.

According to the prosecution, Bhandari and Arya had a dispute over VIP services after which the three pushed the woman into the Cheela canal in Rishikesh.

After her body was found from the canal, the police arrested all three.

Ankita Bhandari **PHOTO: PTI**

Pulkit Arya is the son of former BJP leader Vinod Arya. As soon as the matter came to light, the party showed the door to Vinod Arya.

The murder had triggered protests by locals following which the state government formed a special investigation team to probe it.

The hearing of the case lasted for two years and eight months and during this period 47 witnesses, were examined

The initial investigation into Ankita's disappearance was marred by confusion. The Vanantra Resort is located in a semi-rural area outside the jurisdiction of regular police. Responsibility fell upon a revenue police officer or a "patwari", whose authority and investigative capacity were limited.

The lapse delayed crucial early actions. It wasn't until three days later, under public pressure and mounting suspicions from Ankita's family and friends, that the case was transferred to the regular police. By then, public anger had grown.

State Director General of Police (DGP) Ashok Kumar admitted the absence of immediate police action may have cost the investigation precious time. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

GAUHATI HC SEEKS STATE'S RESPONSE ON FOREIGNERS

GUWAHATI, 30 MAY

The Gauhati High Court has issued a notice to the Assam government, demanding information on the whereabouts of two brothers, Abu Bakkar Siddik and Akbar Ali, who were declared foreigners by a tribunal. The court is also addressing concerns over the "arbitrary arrest" of declared foreigners amid fears of illegal deportation.

A Division Bench, comprising Justice Kalyan Rai Surana and Justice Malasri Nandi, convened on Thursday, calling for the state to clarify the brothers' current status following their detention by Nagarbera police on 25 May. The next hearing is scheduled for 4 June. The writ petition was filed by the brothers' nephew, Torap Ali, who expressed concern that his uncles may face unlawful expulsion to Bangladesh. Authorities reportedly failed to provide updates since the brothers reported to the police station.

Siddik and Ali were previously detained in a Goalpara camp after being declared foreigners in 2017 for not proving eligibility under the Assam Accord's 24 March, 1971 cutoff date. They were released on bail in 2020.

The Foreigners Tribunals in Assam, tasked with ruling on citizenship and immigration status, number around 100. *—PTI*

Harassed for exposing corruption, UP scribe, wife attempt suicide on camera

PILIBHIT, 30 MAY

A local journalist and his wife here posted a video on social media accusing a sub-divisional magistrate (SDM), a town council chairman and a contractor of harassment and consumed poison on camera on Thursday, police said.

Barkheda police said journalist Israr alleged in the video that they were driven to the extreme step by continued harassment by Bisalpur SDM Nagendra Pandey, Barkheda nagar Town Council Chairman Shyam Bihari Bhojwal and contractor Moin Hussain.

The couple was rushed to the district hospital, where Israr is said to be out of danger while his wife is in a critical condition, an officer said.

Journalist Israr and his wife, who had attempted suicide on camera in Uttar Pradesh's Pilibhit district after being allegedly harassed by a sub-divisional magistrate, a nagar panchayat chairman and a contractor

PHOTO: PTI

Israr said the harassment began after his news reports on an alleged corruption in the Barkheda town council caught the attention of the Chief Minister's Office. Hussain, Bhojwal and Pandey continuously threatened the family and falsely implicated them in a case, he said. "We are drinking poison and ending our lives. Yogi ji, we need justice," Israr said in the video.

Pandey dismissed the allegations as "baseless" and claimed "there is no such issue". He said he has directed the Barkheda Station House Officer to investigate the matter. *—PTI*

CBI arrests Odisha ED depuy director for graft

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The CBI has arrested a deputy director of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in Odisha for allegedly taking a Rs 20 lakh bribe from a Bhubaneswar based businessman, officials said on Friday.

Chintan Raghuvanshi allegedly demanded Rs 5 crore from businessman Ratikanta Rout, who has a stone mining business in Dhenkanal, for giving him "relief" in a case registered against him.

The agency laid a trap when he was going to collect the money, the officials said.

According to the FIR, Rout approached the agency with a complaint that he was summoned for questioning at the ED office in Bhubaneswar in March this year. Raghuvanshi called him to his chamber and asked him to meet a person called Bhaghti to get "relief"

Bhaghti had since then been in contact with him, putting pressure on him over Facetime to pay Raghuvanshi to settle the matter, it alleged. On 27 May, Bhaghti allegedly met Rout and said Raghuvanshi demanded Rs 5 crore for "not attaching his Hospital, not arresting him and to settle his case", the FIR said. *—PTI*

Heavy rains cause power disruption

THIRU.PURAM/KOCHI, 30 MAY

As heavy monsoon rains continued to lash many parts of Kerala, uprooting of trees, power disruptions and waterlogging of low-lying areas and places close to rivers were reported from across the state on Friday.

An MGNREGA worker in Ernakulam district, died when an uprooted tree fell on top of her while returning home on 29 May.

The water level of the Muvattupuzha River was flowing above the flood warning markers, leading to the opening of three shutters of the Malankara Dam.

In many places in Wayanad and Idukki districts, people were moved to relief camps from areas prone to landslides and flash floods.

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) issued a red alert in Alappuzha, Kottayam, Ernakulam, Thrissur and Palakkad districts.

It also issued an orange alert in Thiruvananthapuram, Kollam, Pathanamthitta, Idukki, Malappuram, Kozhikode, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod.

Educational institutions remained closed on Friday in several districts, including Pathanamthitta, Ernakulam, Wayanad, Kannur and Kasaragod.

Thunderstorms with heavy to moderate rainfall and winds were likely to occur in some places in all these districts. *—PTI*

Commuters move through a waterlogged road after a heavy rainfall in Kochi on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

HEAVY RAIN LASHES MANIPUR; WATERLOGGING IN IMPHAL

MANIPUR/TRIPURA/ AIZWAL/ SHIMLA, 30 MAY

Heavy rainfall over the past two days has led to severe waterlogging in manipur's Imphal, disrupting daily life and traffic in Kakwa, Thangmeiband, and Sagolband.

The water levels of the Imphal and Serou rivers rose significantly. Heavy rains occurred in Moreh, Kamjong, Chandel and Ukhrul.

The Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) forecast heavy to extremely heavy rainfall in districts including Chandel, Churachandpur and Senapati until 3 June.

Residents have been asked to avoid travel, outdoor activities and riverbanks, exercising caution near flood-prone zones and vlnerable structures.

Tripura

Tripura witnessed intermittent rainfall disrupting daily routines. A red alert was issued for Sepahijala, West Tripura, and Khowai districts.

Several flights were cancelled due to poor weather conditions.

Mizoram

One man was killed and another injured after a wall collapsed on a labourers' camp during heavy rains in Mizoram's Aizawl district.

Landslides, mudslides and rockfall blocked inter-district and national highways at several places. Houses were also damaged.

Schools in all districts, except Saitual remained shut on Friday.

Shimla

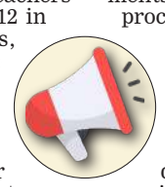
Shimla in Himachal Pradesh faced a sudden hailstorm and downpour on Friday, leading to waterlogging and traffic disruption. Rains, thunderstorms and gusty winds were forecast across the state. *—PTI*

WB announces recruitment of over 35,000 teachers

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

The West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) has issued a notice for the recruitment of 35,726 teachers for classes 9-10 and 11-12 in state-aided schools, adhering to a Supreme Court directive. The recruitment will fill 23,312 positions for secondary education and 12,514 for higher secondary. Applicants must be aged between 21 and 40, with age relaxations for specific categories.

Online applications will be accepted from 16 to 17 June, with candidates receiving copies of their OMR sheets for three years. This notice comes after the Supreme Court upheld a ruling that invalidated previous teacher appointments, stating the selection process was flawed.



Meanwhile, nearly 50 protesting jobless teachers were detained in Kolkata while demanding reinstatement without re-examination. The demonstrators, affiliated with the Deserving Teachers Rights Forum, attempted a march towards the state secretariat, Nabanna. Tensions grew as police intervened, citing disruptions to public order. *—PTI*

2M PEOPLE AT RISK

Hindu Kush Himalaya may lose 75% ice: Study

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Hindu Kush Himalaya, where glaciers feed rivers supporting two billion people, could lose up to 75 per cent of its ice by the end of the century if global temperatures rise by 2 degrees Celsius, said a study published in the journal Science.

If countries can limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels, 40-45 per cent of glacier ice in the Himalayas and the Caucasus would be preserved.

Only about one-quarter of glacier ice globally will be left if the world warms by 2.7 degrees Celsius by the end of this century if today's climate policies continue.

Glacier regions such as the European Alps, the Rockies of the western US and Canada, and Iceland could lose nearly all their ice at 2 degrees Celsius, with only 10-15 per cent of their 2020 levels remaining. Scandinavia could lose all glacier ice.

54 per cent of present-day glacier ice would remain globally and 20-30 per cent in the four most sensitive regions, if this goal is met.

World leaders will attend the first UN conference on glaciers starting Friday in Dushanbe, Tajikistan.

A team of 21 scientists from 10 countries used eight glacier models to calculate the potential ice loss of the more than 200,000 glaciers worldwide, under a wide range of global temperature scenarios.

In all scenarios, the glaciers lose mass rapidly over decades and then continue to melt at a slower pace for centuries, even without further warming. This means they will feel the impact of today's heat for a long time before settling into a new balance as they retreat to higher altitudes. *—PTI*

Musk leaves behind upheaval in Washington

Elon Musk descended upon the US capital with the bravado of a billionaire who had never met a problem he couldn't bulldoze with money, sleepless nights or a cleverly coded algorithm.

President Donald Trump welcomed Musk's entrance with open arms, hailing him as a "smart guy" who "really cares for our country." The world's richest man and a major campaign donor quickly embedded himself into the highest levels of government. In no time, he was presiding over Cabinet meetings in a "tech support" T-shirt and a black MAGA hat, hoisting his young son in the Oval Office, travelling on Air Force One, and even sleeping in the White House.

But the whirlwind reign of Musk, often dubbed Trump's "co-president" by Democrats, has now drawn to a quiet, if chaotic, close. This week, Musk announced he would step down from his post as senior adviser after questioning Trump's flagship legislative proposal and revealing plans to curtail future political donations.

Trump brushed off ethics concerns, ignoring Musk's lack of public service experience and ongoing federal contracts *PHOTO: PTI*

A disruptive vision fizzles out

Musk entered government with ambitions as lofty as his rockets. With previous triumphs at Tesla, SpaceX, and his acquisition of Twitter, he believed Washington could be reengineered to meet Silicon Valley standards. But his legacy is one of grand pronouncements and modest results.

Agencies were gutted, thousands of federal employees dismissed — many indiscriminately and later rehired — but few tangible savings materialised. His initial goal of trimming USD 2 trillion from federal spending shrank to USD 1 trillion, then to USD 150 billion, a figure that may still fall short.

In Silicon Valley parlance, his promises amounted to vapourware — ambitious products that never ship. Musk's tenure stirred up enormous controversy but delivered little of the efficiency or innovation he promised. Trump, undeterred, praised Musk on his Truth Social platform. "This will be his last day, but not really, because he will always be with us, helping all the way. Elon is terrific!" Trump also announced a press conference to mark Musk's departure.

Not your typical presidential adviser

From the outset, Musk made clear he wasn't in Washington to play by the rules. At a campaign rally a month before the election, he bounded on stage beside Trump, his T-shirt riding up to expose his midriff. His enthusiastic pitch for a new Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) — and a USD 250 million donation to Trump's campaign — earned him a desk in the White House.

DOGE's mandate was to root out waste and fraud with a techled approach. But instead of panels of experts, Musk brought in software engineers who accessed sensitive government databases, prompting an exodus of career officials unwilling to comply. Trump brushed off ethics concerns, ignoring Musk's lack of public service experience and ongoing federal contracts.

Musk's rhetoric was dire. "If we don't do this, America will go bankrupt," he warned. Yet while claiming to rescue the nation, he treated the White House like a sandbox — showing off Teslas on the South Lawn, installing a giant video screen in his office, and even inviting his children to official meetings. "I ate a whole tub of caramel ice cream," he joked after one stay in the Lincoln Bedroom. "This stuff's amazing."

A climate of contempt and chaos

Musk's relationship with federal employees was adversarial from the beginning. He saw them as either ineffective or corrupt. His team offered buyouts or forced exits, especially targeting probationary staff without civil service protection.

One initiative — the infamous "five things" memo — required every employee to list five accomplishments each week, under threat of automatic resignation. Senior officials ultimately scaled the plan back, concerned about its impact on national security.

But Musk continued to wield executive power aggressively. In February, he posted "CFPB RIP " on social media. The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau — created to shield Americans from financial fraud post-2008 — was abruptly shuttered. Staff were told to cease work immediately.

He also targeted the US Agency for International Development (USAID), bragging he'd "fed it into a wood chipper." Thousands of contacts with aid recipients were cut, hampering global humanitarian relief. When questioned about the toll, Musk retorted, "No one has died." Yet experts confirmed that some children relying on US aid perished from malnutrition, and the death toll is expected to climb.

Lawsuits, reversals, and rehires

Government agencies began buckling under the weight of Musk's changes. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA), responsible for everything from vaccines to baby formula, laid off 1,900 staff and lost another 1,200 to early retirement. Many dismissed scientists and administrative staff had to be rehired following court rulings.

"It was hard, and my job is to make sure we can heal from that," said FDA Commissioner Marty Makary.

The National Park Service saw staffing levels drop, leaving visitors with fewer rangers and unsanitary conditions. The Forest Service, also trimmed, now faces heightened wildfire risks. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) endured deep cuts to its Office of Research and Development, weakening air and water quality monitoring.

Even institutions like the US Institute of Peace, a quiet Congressional think tank, weren't safe. Its leaders were ousted by Musk's team and later reinstated after legal challenges.

No progress on the real money

Despite the upheaval, Musk struggled to tackle the biggest components of the federal budget — Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, and defence — all politically fraught and requiring congressional approval.

Still, Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth followed Musk's lead by trimming the civilian workforce and aiming to cut back on oversight functions. Yet the Pentagon budget would increase by USD 150 billion under Trump's proposal, including USD 25 billion for a "golden dome" missile defence system and USD 34 billion to expand the Navy.

A further USD 45 million has been earmarked for a military parade on June 14, marking the Army's 250th anniversary, and Trump's 79th birthday.

Musk also drew fire for calling Social Security a "Ponzi scheme," suggesting that targeting fraud could save between USD 500 billion and USD 700 billion. In reality, the program recorded USD 71.8 billion in improper payments over eight years, a far cry from Musk's projections. His overhaul of Social Security services was rolled back following political backlash, but not before threatening 7,000 jobs and several office closures.

Public backlash and popularity plunge

Despite aligning with widespread public frustration over bloated bureaucracy, Musk's popularity took a nosedive. According to a poll by the Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research, only 33 per cent of US adults held a favourable view of Musk in April, down from 41 per cent in December. Two-thirds believed he had too much influence over the federal government.

Lofty goals, modest results

At a campaign rally last October, Musk vowed to identify USD 2 trillion in cuts. By January, he revised that to USD 1 trillion. In April, during a Cabinet meeting, he triumphantly announced they could achieve USD 150 billion in savings — a figure far below expectations. DOGE's accounting is murky, and many claims appear overstated. For comparison, President Bill Clinton's "reinventing government" initiative in the 1990s saved USD 136 billion — equivalent to over USD 240 billion today — and shrank the federal workforce by more than 400,000 through strategic, long-term reforms. "We went about it methodically, department by department," recalled Elaine Kamarck, a key architect of Clinton's programme. "They made some changes without really knowing what they were doing," said Alex Nowrasteh of the libertarian Cato Institute. —PTI

SALAR سالار

Google faces off US in court over search monopoly case

Google returned to US federal court on Friday to defend itself against a landmark antitrust case brought by the Department of Justice (DOJ), amid a pivotal moment in technology as artificial intelligence threatens to upend its long-standing dominance.

The proceedings mark the final stages of a legal battle that could reshape the internet's landscape. At stake is the future of Google's search engine, already declared an illegal monopoly by US District Judge Amit Mehta last year. Now, closing arguments will determine what remedies will be imposed on the tech giant — potentially altering its business model and market reach.

The DOJ is calling for sweeping changes, including a ban on Google paying to be the default search engine on smartphones and other devices, and an unprecedented order requiring Google to divest its Chrome browser. This, the government argues, would prevent the company from leveraging its dominance in search and browser data to maintain control in the emerging AI-powered search era.

Google, in contrast, argues for minimal changes. Its lawyers claim the market is already shifting dramatically due to AI innovation, which is transforming how people access information. Startups like OpenAI and Perplexity are developing conversational search tools that could, over time, erode Google's search dominance.

"Over weeks of testimony, we heard from a series of well-funded companies eager to gain access to Google's technology so they don't have to innovate themselves," wrote Lee-Anne Mulholland, Google's vice president of regulatory affairs, in a blog post earlier this month. "What we didn't hear was how DOJ's extreme proposals would benefit consumers."

Judge Mehta will now deliberate through the summer, with a ruling expected before Labour Day. Google has pledged to appeal last year's monopoly ruling — a step it cannot take until remedies are officially ordered.

Both sides agree on one thing: artificial intelligence represents a turning point for the tech industry. But the DOJ insists AI alone won't diminish Google's entrenched power. Instead, it argues that legal action is essential to prevent the company from using its resources and user data to dominate the AI frontier as it has in traditional search.

Google has already begun incorporating AI into its search engine, transitioning it toward an "answer engine" model. This has helped Google maintain its grip as the web's main gateway, even as alternatives emerge.

A centrepiece of the DOJ's remedy proposals is forcing Google to sell its Chrome browser — the very tool that CEO Sundar Pichai helped build nearly two decades ago. The DOJ argues that Chrome allows Google to gather vast amounts of data and traffic, reinforcing its competitive edge in AI.

Executives from AI firms OpenAI and Perplexity testified last month that they would be eager bidders if Chrome were sold off. Such a move, the DOJ argues, would help open the market to new players and spur competition.

The case has drawn responses from across the tech ecosystem. Apple — which reportedly earns over $20 billion annually from Google for keeping it the default search engine on its devices — filed briefs opposing the proposed ban on such agreements. Apple argued that losing this revenue would undermine its own research investments, while consumers might still choose Google, rendering the restriction ineffective.

Apple further told the court it would not respond to a ban by creating a competing search engine, suggesting the proposal would not increase competition.

Legal scholars also criticised the proposed Chrome divestiture, calling it an excessive government overreach. Former Federal Trade Commission officials James Cooper and Andrew Stivers raised concerns about another DOJ proposal that would require Google to share user data with rivals. They warned such a move risks violating user expectations around privacy and data security.

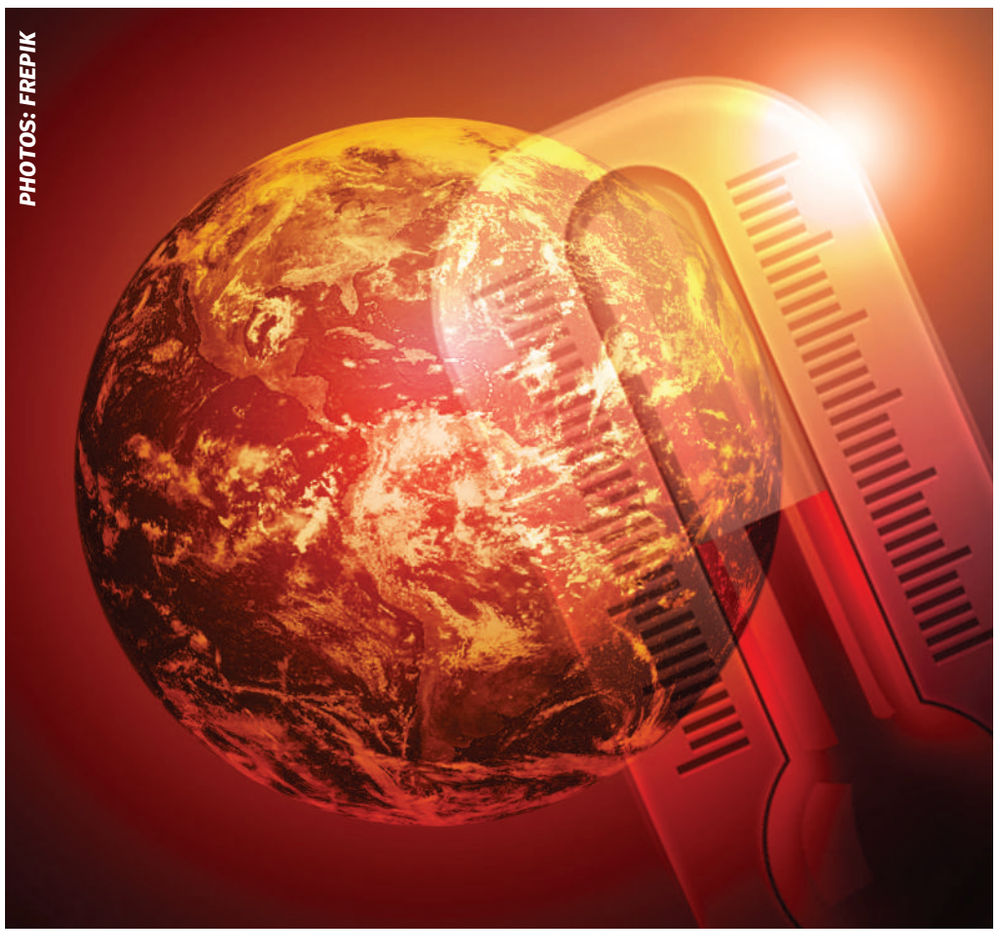
The App Association, representing small software developers, urged Judge Mehta to reject the DOJ's remedies, warning they could destabilise the broader tech industry. "Developers will be overcome by uncertainty" if Google is broken up, the association stated, warning that smaller firms may find it harder to reach users or secure acquisitions.

However, not all voices aligned with Google. Y Combinator, a leading startup incubator whose alumni are collectively valued at about $800 billion, submitted filings backing a dramatic overhaul. It argued Google's dominance has created a "kill zone" that discourages venture investment in sectors where the company is entrenched. "Startups need to be able to get their products into the hands of users, free from restrictive dealing and self-preferencing," Y Combinator said. "Google has locked up the most critical distribution channels, freezing the general search and search text advertising markets into static competition for more than a decade." —PTI

Google has already begun incorporating AI into its search engine

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

4 billion endured extra month of extreme heat due to climate change



PHOTOS: FREPIK

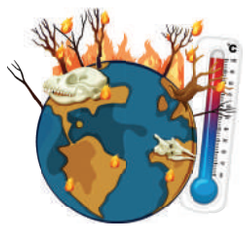
Scientists say 4 billion people, about half the world's population, experienced at least one extra month of extreme heat because of human-caused climate change from May 2024 to May 2025.

The extreme heat caused illness, death, crop losses, and strained energy and health care systems, according to the analysis from World Weather Attribution, Climate Central and the Red Cross.

"Although floods and cyclones often dominate headlines, heat is arguably the deadliest extreme event," the report said. Many heat-related deaths are unreported or are mislabeled by other conditions like heart disease or kidney failure.

The scientists used peer-reviewed methods to study how much climate change boosted temperatures in an extreme heat event and calculated how much more likely its occurrence was because of climate change. In almost all countries in the world, the number of extreme heat days has at least doubled compared with a world without climate change.

Caribbean islands were among the hardest hit by additional extreme heat days. Puerto Rico, a territory of the United States, endured 161 days of extreme heat. Without climate change, only 48 would have occurred.



- Low-income communities and vulnerable populations, such as older adults and people with medical conditions, suffer the most from extreme heat.

"It makes it feel impossible to be outside," said Charlotte Gossett Navarro, chief director for Puerto Rico at Hispanic Federation, a nonprofit focused on social and environmental issues in Latino communities, who lives in the San Juan area and was not involved in the report.

"Even something as simple as trying to have a day outdoors with family, we weren't able to do it because the heat was too high," she said, reporting feeling dizzy and sick last summer.

When the power goes out, which happens frequently in Puerto Rico in part because of decades of neglected grid maintenance and damage from Hurricane Maria in 2017, Navarro said it is difficult to sleep. "If you are someone relatively healthy, that is uncomfortable, it's hard to sleep ... but if you are someone who has a health condition, now your life is at risk," Gossett Navarro said.

Heat waves are silent killers, said Friederike Otto, associate professor of climate science at Imperial College London, one of the report's authors. "People don't fall dead on the street in a heat wave ... people either die in hospitals or in poorly insulated homes and therefore are just not seen," he said.

Low-income communities and vulnerable populations, such as older adults and people with medical conditions, suffer the most from extreme heat.

The high temperatures recorded in the extreme heat events that occurred in Central Asia in March, South Sudan in February and in the Mediterranean last July would have not been possible without climate change, according to the report.

At least 21 people died in Morocco after temperatures hit 48 degrees Celsius last July. People are noticing temperatures are getting hotter but don't always know it is being driven by climate change, said Roop Singh, head of urban and attribution at the Red Cross Red Crescent Climate Centre, in a World Weather Attribution statement.

"We need to quickly scale our responses to heat through better early warning systems, heat action plans, and long-term planning for heat in urban areas to meet the rising challenge," Singh said.

City-led initiatives to tackle extreme heat are becoming popular in parts of South Asia, North America, Europe and Australia to coordinate resources across governments and other agencies. One example is a tree-planting initiative launched in Marseille, France, to create more shaded areas.

The report says strategies to prepare for heat waves include monitoring and reporting systems for extreme temperatures, providing emergency health services, cooling shelters, updated building codes, enforcing heat safety rules at work, and designing cities to be more heat-resilient.

But without phasing out fossil fuels, heat waves will continue becoming more severe and frequent and protective measures against the heat will lose their effectiveness, the scientists said. —PTI

Five Mexicans found dead at US border near Texas

CIUDAD VICTORIA, 30 MAY

Five bodies that appeared to be members of a Mexican regional music group who had gone missing were found in the northern city of Reynosa, along the Texas border, authorities said on Thursday. The musicians from the band Grupo Fugitivo, which played at parties and local dances in the region, had been reported missing since Sunday. Young artistes have mixed the Mexican regional music with trap and sometimes pay homage to leaders of drug cartels, often portrayed as Robin Hood-type figures. While it was not immediately clear if the group played such songs, other artistes have faced death threats by cartels, while others have had their visas stripped under accusations by the Trump administration that they were glorifying criminal violence. *—PTI*

Indian staying in US illegally held for child abuse

NEW YORK, 30 MAY

American border authorities have arrested an Indian citizen living illegally in the US wanted for child predator charges. Gurdev Singh, 42, was arrested on Wednesday by US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers at the Port of Champlain border crossing in New York. Singh had an active felony arrest warrant from Indiana. Singh was processed by CBP officers and turned over to the New York State Police, as a fugitive from justice. He is currently being held by the Clinton County Sheriff's Office, awaiting extradition. CBP officers encountered Singh after he was refused entry into Canada. During his primary inspection, the National Crime Information Center indicated that Singh was wanted in Indiana for child solicitation, solicitation for sexual intercourse. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Russell Brand pleads not guilty to rape charges

LONDON, 30 MAY

Actor and comedian Russell Brand pleaded not guilty in a London court Friday to rape and sexual assault charges involving four women dating back more than 25 years. Brand, who turns 50 next week, denied two counts of rape, two counts of sexual assault and one count of indecent assault. He said "not guilty" after each charge was read in Southwark Crown Court. His trial was scheduled for 3 June, 2026 and is expected to last four to five weeks. Prosecutors said the offenses took place between 1999 and 2005 — one in the English seaside town of Bournemouth and the other three in London. *—PTI*

Japan to provide over $1B in support to Bangladesh

DHAKA, 30 MAY

Japan and Bangladesh have formalised a significant financial agreement, with Tokyo pledging USD 1.063 billion to Dhaka for various initiatives, including budget support and railway enhancements. The announcement, made by Bangladesh's Chief Adviser's Press Wing on Friday, revealed that USD 418 million will be allocated as a Development Policy Loan aimed at bolstering Bangladesh's economic reforms and climate resilience. Additionally, Japan will provide USD 641 million for the upgrade of the Joydevpur-Ishwardi railway track and USD 4.2 million in grants for scholarships. The discussions followed a meeting between Bangladesh's Muhammad Yunus and Japanese Prime Minister Ishiba Shigeru during Yunus's official visit to Japan. The two nations also signed several deals on investment promotion. *—ANI*

Smoke rises following an Israeli army bombardment in the Gaza Strip on Thursday **PHOTO: PTI**

Hamas agrees to consider US ceasefire proposal

Militant group says it's not enough to stop war

JERUSALEM, 30 MAY

Israel had accepted a new US proposal for a temporary ceasefire with Hamas, the White House said on Thursday. Although Hamas agreed to study the proposal, they said it prima facie does not stop the war.

White House Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that Israel "backed and supported" the new proposal.

Hamas officials gave the Israeli-approved draft a cool response, but said they wanted to study the proposal more closely before giving a formal answer.

"The Zionist response, in essence, means perpetuating the occupation and continuing the killing and famine," Bassem Naim, a top Hamas official, said. He said it "does not respond to any of our people's demands, foremost among which is stopping the war and famine."

Nonetheless, he said the group would study the proposal "with all national responsibility."

Hamas had previously said it had agreed with Witkoff on a "general framework" of an agreement that would lead to a lasting ceasefire, a full Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, an influx of aid, and a transfer of power from the militant group to a politically independent committee of Palestinians.

Witkoff has not publicised his latest proposal, but a Hamas official and an Egyptian official independently confirmed some of the details.

They say it calls for a 60-day pause in fighting, guarantees of serious negotiations leading to a long-term truce and assurances that Israel will not resume hostilities after the release of hostages, as it did in March. Israeli forces would pull back to the positions they held during the ceasefire Israel ended that month.

Hamas would release 10 living hostages and a number of bodies during the 60-day pause in exchange for more than 1,100 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel, including 100 serving long sentences after being convicted of deadly attacks.

Each day, hundreds of trucks carrying food and humanitarian aid would be allowed to enter Gaza, where experts say a nearly three-month Israeli blockade — slightly eased in recent days — has pushed the population to the brink of famine. *—PTI*

Appeals court allows Trump tariffs to stay

WASHINGTON/ CHARLESTON 30 MAY

A federal appeals court on Thursday allowed US President Donald Trump to continue collecting tariffs under an emergency powers law for now, as his administration appeals an order striking down the bulk of his signature set of economic policies.

The Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit granted an emergency motion from the Trump administration arguing that a halt is "critical for the country's national security".

The appeals court temporarily halted the order from a federal trade court issued a day before.

Trump is facing several lawsuits arguing his "Liberation Day" tariffs exceeded his authority and left the country's trade policy dependent on his whims.

A three-judge panel of the US Court of International Trade ruled on Wednesday that Trump overstepped his

authority when he invoked the 1977 International Emergency Economic Powers Act to declare trade deficits a national emergency and plaster taxes – tariffs – on imports from almost every country in the world.

Meanwhile, the Trump administration is dropping plans to terminate leases for 34 offices in the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA), the agency responsible for enforcing mine safety laws, the Department of Labour said Thursday.

Earlier this year, the Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) targeted federal agencies for spending cuts, including terminating leases for three dozen MSHA offices. Ending the MSHA leases had been projected to save USD 18 million.

The move comes shortly after Elon Musk stepped down as DOGE head. *—PTI*

WH sees flaws in RFK Jr's MAHA report

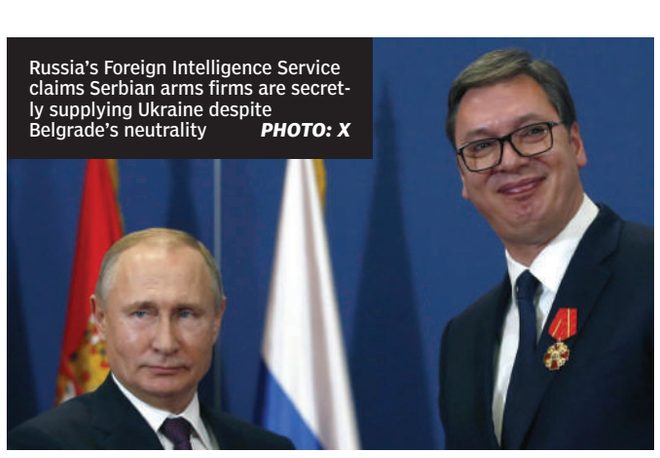
The White House will fix errors in a much-anticipated federal government report spearheaded by US Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr, which decried America's food supply, pesticides and prescription drugs. Press secretary Karoline said the report will be updated. "I understand there were some formatting issues with the MAHA report that are being addressed." *—PTI*

US Court narrows environmental law's scope

The US Supreme Court on Thursday narrowed the scope of environmental reviews required for major infrastructure projects in a ruling that could accelerate development of railroads, highways and pipelines around the country. Environmental groups said the decision would have sweeping impacts on how the National Environmental Policy Act is applied. *—PTI*

US formally moves to dismiss prosecution

The US Justice Department has formally moved to dismiss a criminal fraud charge against Boeing and has asked a judge to cancel an upcoming trial connected to two plane crashes that killed 346 people off the coast of Indonesia and in Ethiopia. The deal will allow the American aircraft manufacturer to avoid criminal prosecution for allegedly misleading US regulators. *—PTI*



Russia's Foreign Intelligence Service claims Serbian arms firms are secretly supplying Ukraine despite Belgrade's neutrality **PHOTO: X**

Russia accuses Serbia of arming Ukraine

BELGRADE, 29 MAY

Russia on Thursday accused Serbia of exporting arms to Ukraine, saying it's a stab in the back by its longtime Slavic Balkan ally.

"Serbian defence enterprises, contrary to the neutrality declared by Belgrade, continue to supply ammunition to Kyiv," the Russian foreign intelligence service, SVR, said in a statement.

The statement alleged that the export of Serbian arms to Ukraine are going through NATO intermediaries, "primarily the Czech Republic, Poland and Bulgaria. Recently, exotic options involving African states have also been used for this purpose".

Serbia's populist President Aleksandar Vucic told the state RTS television that he recently discussed the issue of arms exports to Ukraine with Russian President Vladimir Putin and that it was agreed that the two countries form a "working group" to establish how Serbian-made weapons reach the Ukrainian frontlines.

Serbian arms exports to Ukraine, mostly the Soviet-era-caliber ammunition still used by Ukraine's defence forces, have long been known since 2023, but it's not clear why the Russian foreign security service decided to react now. *—PTI*

Macron opens Singapore security conference

SINGAPORE, 30 MAY

World leaders, including French President Emmanuel Macron and US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth, gathered in Singapore this weekend for a significant security forum. The discussions are centred on China's increasing assertiveness, the global repercussions of Russia's war in Ukraine, and escalating tensions in Asia.

Macron delivered the keynote address on Friday, addressing these pressing issues, alongside the impact of hefty tariffs imposed by former President Donald Trump's administration on Asian allies.

Macron warned that France could "apply sanctions" against Israel unless the government responds to the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

"The humanitarian blockade is creating a situation that is untenable on the ground," Macron said at a joint news conference alongside Singapore's Prime Minister Lawrence Wong. "If there is no response in the coming hours and days in line with the humanitarian situation, we will have to harden our collective position".

Emmanuel Macron and Pete Hegseth **PHOTO: WIKIPEDIA**

This marks Hegseth's inaugural attendance at the Shangri-La Dialogue, which is taking place amid rising tensions between Beijing and Washington over tariffs and uncertainties regarding US commitments to Taiwan's defence.

China, which typically sends its Defence Minister, is represented by a lower-level delegation this year.

Hegseth reaffirmed that US policies aim to deter any Chinese military action against Taiwan, stating, "We seek no conflict with anybody, including the Communist Chinese." *—PTI*

Indo-American Zaki wins spelling bee

NEW YORK, 30 MAY

Faizan Zaki, a 13-year-old Indian-American student from Texas, triumphed at the Scripps National Spelling Bee by correctly spelling "éclaircissement," further solidifying the community's dominance in the prestigious US competition. Zaki, a 7th grader at CM Rice Middle School, edged out Sarvadnya Kadam, claiming victory on Thursday night.

This marks Zaki's fourth appearance at the competition, having finished as runner-up in 2024. He secured the title in round 21, outlasting eight other skilled spellers. Earlier in the contest, Zaki had a chance to win in round 18, but after a hasty start, he mispronounced his word and was disqualified.

Faizan Zaki had no regrets about showing that enthusiasm, even though it nearly cost him **PHOTO: X**

Overjoyed at his win, Zaki exclaimed, "I don't know what to say. I'm just really happy." Organisers praised the support of his family watching from Hyderabad. *—PTI*

IS claims 1st attack on Syrian forces since Assad's fall

BEIRUT, 30 MAY

The Islamic State group has asserted responsibility for two recent attacks in southern Syria, including a significant assault on government forces—the first of its kind since the fall of the Assad regime, according to an opposition monitor.

In statements released late Thursday, the Islamic State group reported that a bomb targeting a "vehicle of the apostate regime" detonated on May 22 in the al-Safa area of Sweida, resulting in seven soldiers being killed or injured. *—PTI*

PEACEFUL DISPUTE RESOLUTION

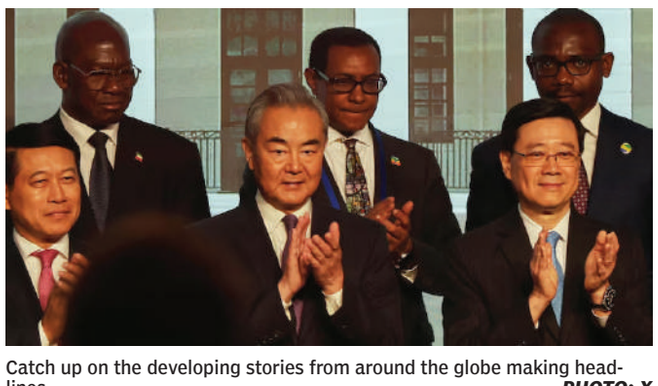
Dozens join China's new mediation group

HONG KONG/TOKYO 30 MAY

Dozens of countries joined China on Friday in establishing an international mediation-based dispute resolution group.

Representatives of more than 30 other countries, from Pakistan and Indonesia to Belarus and Cuba, signed the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation in Hong Kong to become founding members of the global organisation, following Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

The ceremony was attended by representatives from some 50 countries and about 20 organisations, including the United Nations. The support signals Beijing's rising influence in the global south.



Catch up on the developing stories from around the globe making headlines **PHOTO: X**

Wang said China has long advocated for handling differences with a spirit of mutual understanding and consensus-building through dialogue, while aiming to provide "Chinese wisdom" for resolving conflicts. "The establishment of the International Organisation for Mediation helps to move beyond the zero-sum mindset of you lose and I win". *—PTI/ANI*

China to resume Japanese seafood imports

China will resume Japanese seafood imports that it banned in 2023 over worries about Japan's discharge of wastewater from the damaged Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant into the sea, a Japanese official said Friday. China had blocked imports of Japanese seafood because it said the release would endanger the fishing industry and coastal communities in eastern China. *—PTI*

Russia-India-China troika should be back: Lavrov

MOSCOW, 30 MAY

Sergey Lavrov **PHOTO:X**

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has said his country is genuinely interested in the revival of activities within the framework of the Russia-India-China (RIC) format, reports said. Following the deadly Galwan Valley standoff between the militaries of India and China in 2020, the RIC troika has not been very active.

"I would like to confirm our genuine interest in the earliest resumption of the work within the format of the troika, which was established many years ago and organised meetings more than 20 times since then, not only at the level of foreign policy chiefs but also the heads of other economic, trade and financial agencies of the three countries," Lavrov said.

The foreign minister was addressing an international social and political conference in the city of Perm in the Ural Mountains where Europe borders Asia. "As of today, as I understand, an understanding has been reached between India and China on how to ease the situation on the border, and it seems to me that the time has come for the revival of this RIC troika," Lavrov said. *—PTI*

Gold price rises by ₹100 to ₹98,600 for 10g

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Gold prices rose Rs 100 to Rs 98,600 per 10g in the national capital on Friday due to a pick-up demand by the jewellers and retailers, according to the All India Sarafa Association. Gold of 99.5 per cent purity climbed Rs 100 to Rs 98,100 per 10g (inclusive of all taxes). In addition, silver prices remained flat for the second straight session at Rs 1,00,000 per kg (inclusive of all taxes) on Friday. On the global front, spot gold dipped by USD 21.91 per ounce or 0.66 per cent to USD 3,295.82 per ounce. "Gold is trading steady near USD 3,320 per ounce, with investors' focus shifting to upcoming US Core Personal Consumption Expenditures (PCE) data, University of Michigan inflation expectations, and consumer sentiment," Kaynat Chainwala, AVP Commodity Research at Kotak Securities, said. —*PTI*

Rupee loses 8P, settles at 85.56 against US dollar

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

The rupee pared its initial gains to settle 8 paise lower at 85.56 (provisional) against the US dollar on Friday, as volatility in domestic equities and recovering global crude prices pressured the local currency. However, a steady inflow of foreign funds supported the domestic unit even as investors stayed cautious, awaiting domestic GDP data to be released later in the day, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange, the domestic unit opened at 85.35 and moved between the intraday high of 85.25 and the low of 85.64 against the greenback. The unit settled the day at 85.56 (provisional), registering a loss of 8 paise from its previous close. The rupee ended 10 paise lower at 85.48 against the dollar on Thursday. —*PTI*

Paper imports reach record 2M tonnes in FY25

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India's imports of paper reached a record 2.05million tonnes in 2024-25, with shipments from China rising by 33 per cent, the Indian Paper Manufacturers Association (IPMA) reported on Friday. This surge poses a serious threat to the domestic paper industry, hindering growth and discouraging investment in capacity expansion, the association warned. According to Commerce Ministry data cited by the IPMA, imports have nearly doubled over the past four years, from 1.08 million tonnes in FY21 to 2.05 million tonnes in FY25. China now accounts for 27per cent of these imports, while the ASEAN bloc represents 20per cent. In value terms, imports reached around Rs 15,000 crore in FY25. IPMA President Pawan Agarwal said increased imports have made many small and medium-sized Indian paper mills commercially unviable. He called on the government to enforce stricter quality controls, and introduce measures to ensure a level playing field for Indian manufacturers. —*PTI*

Myntra creates over 20K gig jobs to meet demand

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Fashion and lifestyle e-commerce platform Myntra on Friday said it has created over 20,000 employment opportunities through its partners to cater to the expected surge in demand during its 22nd edition of the End of Reason Sale (EORS) beginning Saturday. The new roles will support logistics, customer service, and last-mile delivery operations to meet the expected surge in demand. The hiring includes approximately 4,500 delivery partners and 1,000 customer service agents. Around 22 per cent of the new warehouse workforce are women, fulfilling roles such as sorting, grading and packing across the fulfilment centres in Bengaluru, Mumbai, Kolkata and Delhi, according to a company statement. —*PTI*

Markets slip on IT stakes drain, weak Asian peers

Uncertainty after US court U-turn on tariffs causes trouble

MUMBAI, 30 MAY

Stock markets closed lower in a range-bound trade on Friday following losses in IT shares and sluggish trends in Asian markets due to trade uncertainty after a US appeals court temporarily reinstated reciprocal tariffs.

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 182.01 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at 81,451.01 as 24 of its constituents retreated and six advanced. During the day, it dropped 346.57 points or 0.42 per cent to 81,286.45.

The NSE Nifty dipped 82.90 points or 0.33 per cent to 24,750.70.

Metals, IT, and auto sector shares declined while banking shares gained.

Investors were cautious ahead of the release of domestic GDP data post-market hours, analysts said.

Among Sensex firms, Tech Mahindra fell the most by 1.73 per cent. HCL Tech, Asian Paints, NTPC, Infosys, Nestle, Sun Pharma, and Tata Steel also closed lower.

Eternal, State Bank of India, HDFC Bank, Larsen & Toubro, Reliance Industries and Bajaj Finserv were the gainers.

PHOTO: PTI

The 30-share BSE Sensex declined by 182.01 points or 0.22 per cent to settle at 81,451.01 as 24 of its constituents retreated and six advanced. During the day, it dropped 346.57 points or 0.42 per cent to 81,286.45

"Markets languished in negative territory to end lower amid weak Asian cues as investors cut their position in IT, metal, oil & gas and auto shares," Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP (Research), Mehta Equities Ltd, said.

The BSE midcap gauge declined 0.39 per cent while smallcap index went up by 0.17 per cent.

Among sectoral indices, metal dropped the most by 1.68 per cent, followed by BSE Focused IT (1.14 per cent), commodities (1.14 per cent), utilities (1.09 per cent), teck (0.99 per cent), auto (0.91 per cent) and telecommunication (0.79 per cent). Financial Services, bankex and capital goods were the gainers.

On the weekly front, the BSE benchmark declined 270.07 points or 0.33 per cent and the Nifty dipped 102.45 points or 0.41 per cent. Global oil benchmark Brent crude climbed 0.44 per cent to USD 64.43 a barrel. —*PTI*

BOOSTING FINANCIAL TIES

Saudi fund may get relief from foreign investment rules

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

PHOTO: PTI

In a bid to strengthen financial ties between the two nations and attract capital flows, India will exempt Saudi Arabia's sovereign wealth fund from certain foreign portfolio investment (FPI) rules, reports said.

The rules, which mandates combining investments through various sovereign entities together and limit its level to 10 per cent in one company, have prevented different subsidiaries of the Public Investment Fund from investing more in India, the media reports said.

Both countries agreed to promote investment in areas including energy, infrastructure and pharmaceuticals during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the Gulf nation in April. The reports said India is also negotiating a bilateral investment treaty with Saudi Arabia.

The requirement to club investment from different sovereign entities together limits the ability of the Saudi fund and its subsidiaries to invest independently, the report said.

The exemption granted to the Saudi fund will allow its various arms to invest separately, enhancing their flexibility in deploying capital into Indian markets without breaching regulatory thresholds, it said.

The Finance Ministry and the Saudi fund did not respond to requests for comment.

The Public Investment Fund is one of the largest sovereign wealth funds globally with assets of about $925 billion under management. Its current exposure in India remains limited to $1.5 billion in Jio Platforms and $1.3 billion in Reliance Retail, according to its website. India eyes long-term capital from energy-rich Gulf nations, while Saudi wants to expand its investments in fast-growing economies as part of its Vision 2030 diversification strategy.

—*Salar News with agencies*

Adani taps its largest bond of ₹5K crore

AHMEDABAD, 30 MAY

Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone (APSEZ) on Friday announced it has successfully raised Rs 5,000 crore through a 15-year Non-Convertible Debenture (NCD).

Backed by APSEZ's strong financials and a "AAA/Stable" domestic credit rating, the issue locked in a competitive coupon rate of 7.75 per cent per cent, and was fully subscribed by LIC, the Adani Group company said in a statement.

Debentures are long-term financial instruments that companies issue to raise more money from investors.

The debentures will be listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange.

The Adani Group company claimed that the NCD issue shows APSEZ's deep access to long-term capital from diversified sources at attractive pricing and significantly enhances APSEZ's debt maturity profile.It added that the transaction highlights APSEZ's access to domestic markets for its longest tenure issuance to date, and one of the longest in Indian capital markets history. —*ANI*

NEW RBI DRAFT

Fin Min urges exclusion of gold loan norms up to ₹2L

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The finance ministry on Friday said it has examined the draft guidelines on gold loan by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and suggested exclusion of small borrowers of up to Rs 2 lakh from the provisions of the proposed norms amid opposition from a section of political parties in Tamil Nadu.

The RBI on 9 April issued comprehensive draft guidelines on gold loans with a view to harmonise regulatory framework to enhance underwriting, improve collateral management and monitor the end-use of funds.

It also proposed that all loans classified against gold will have a loan-to-value ratio of not more than 75 per cent of the value of gold.

Draft Directions on Lending Against Gold Collateral issued by the RBI have been examined by the Department of Financial Services (DFS) under guidance of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, and the DFS has given suggestions to the Central bank to ensure that the requirements of the small gold loan borrowers are not adversely affected, the finance ministry posted on X.

The DFS said such guidelines will need time to implement at the field level and hence, may be suitable for implementation from 1 January 2026, it said.

The RBI is reviewing the feedback received on the draft guidelines and expected that concerns raised by various stakeholders, as well as the feedback received from the public, will be duly considered by the RBI before finalising the norms, it said.

Some political parties and farmers' associations in Tamil Nadu opposed the draft guideline —*PTI*

Net savings to touch ₹22L cr: SBI

KOLKATA, 30 MAY

The State Bank of India's latest economic research report said that based on current trends, the net financial savings of the household sector may touch Rs 22 lakh crore, or 6.5 per cent of gross national disposable income (GNDI), in the financial year 2024–25.

The net financial savings during 2023–24 stood at 5.1 per cent of GNDI, an increase from 4.9 per cent in the previous fiscal.

The report said the growing capital pool is crucial for funding government and corporate deficits and supporting macroeconomic stability.

Referring to the dynamics of RBI surplus, the report said the central bank's efforts to contain the volatility of the rupee were a major factor in determining its quantum.

During fiscal 2024–25, the RBI's balance sheet expanded by 8.19 per cent, which is less than the nominal GDP growth of 9.9 per cent.

An amount of Rs 2.69 lakh crore surplus amount of RBI has been transferred to the government, which would enhance the fiscal space, the report said.

According to the report, the incidence of fraud cases had declined, but defraud amounts tripled to Rs 36,014 crore.

On the other hand, card and internet fraud volume decreased significantly from 29,802 in 2023–24 to 13,516 in 2024–25. —*PTI*

CCPA ISSUES NORMS FOR WALKIE-TALKIE ONLINE SALES

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

The Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) has issued new guidelines to curb the illegal sale of radio equipment, including walkie-talkies, on e-commerce platforms. The rules aim to prevent the listing of such devices without required frequency disclosures, licensing details, or Equipment Type Approval (ETA), in line with the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

Developed in coordination with the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), the guidelines address concerns over unauthorised sales that may pose regulatory and security risks. The CCPA noted that many listings mislead consumers by omitting vital information, falsely implying these devices are licence-free. The updated framework mandates that only compliant devices using permitted frequencies may be sold online. —*PTI*

OYO eyes to rebrand parent firm

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

OYO Founder Ritesh Agarwal has invited name suggestions for its parent firm Oravel Stays in a strategic move even as the global travel tech platform prepares to launch its IPO and looks to have more premium segment offerings.

"We are renaming the corporate brand behind it all – the parent company powering a global ecosystem of urban innovation and modern living. We believe it's time the world had a new kind of global brand – born in India, but built for the world," he said. He offered a prize of Rs 3 lakh to the winner along with a chance to meet him.

Meanwhile, the IPO of 3B Films, a manufacturer of high-quality plastic packaging films, opened for subscription on Friday at Rs 50 apiece. The company is looking to raise Rs 33.75 crore though the initial share sale which will remain open until 3 June, it said in a statement.

The shares of the company will be listed on the SME platform of the BSE and the investors can bid for a minimum of 3,000 shares and in multiples thereof, it added —*PTI*

OYO Founder Ritesh Agarwal has offered a Rs 3 lakh prize for suggesting the best name PHOTO: PTI

SADHNA BROADCAST

Sebi bans Arshad Warsi, 58 others for 5 years

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Markets regulator Sebi has barred Bollywood actor Arshad Warsi, his wife Maria Goretti, and 57 other entities from the securities markets for 1-5 years in a case related to misleading videos on YouTube channels recommending investors to buy shares of Sadhna Broadcast.

The regulator imposed a fine of Rs 5 lakh each on Warsi and his wife Maria. The couple were restrained by the markets watchdog from the securities market for 1 year, as per an order passed by Sebi on Thursday.

Sebi has also levied penalties of Rs 5 lakh to Rs 5 crore on 57 other entities, including promoters of Sadhna Broadcast.

Arshad Warsi
PHOTO: PTI

Apart from the debarment, Sebi directed these 59 entities to disgorge total unlawful gains worth Rs 58.01 crore along with 12 per cent interest per annum jointly and severally from the end of the investigation period till the date of actual payment.

Sebi noted that Arshad had made a profit of Rs 41.70 lakh and his wife earned a profit of Rs 50.35 lakh.

In the final order, Sebi found that the masterminds behind this whole operation were Gaurav Gupta, Rakesh Kumar Gupta and Manish Mishra. Subhash Aggarwal, who also happened to be a director of the RTA of Sadhna Broadcast Ltd (SBL), acted as the go between Manish Mishra and the promoters, the order stated. Further, the regulator observed that Peeyush Agarwal and Lokesh Shah facilitated accounts controlled by them to be used for the manipulative designs of Manish Mishra and the promoters of SBL —*PTI*

India's defence budget to reach ₹31.7L crore

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

India's defence sector is poised for a significant transformation by 2047, with the total defence budget projected to rise to Rs 31.7 lakh crore—nearly five times the Rs 6.8 lakh crore allocated in 2024–25, according to a joint report by the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and KPMG.

Defence production is estimated to surge from Rs 1.6 lakh crore to Rs 8.8 lakh crore, while exports are expected to jump from Rs 30,000 crore to Rs 2.8 lakh crore. The share of capital expenditure in the defence budget will likely increase from 27 per cent to 40 per cent, with R&D spending rising from 4 per cent to 8–10 per cent. Defence spending as a share of GDP may double to 4–5 per cent.

The report projects India to become the world's third-largest defence spender by 2047, up from the fourth place. But challenges persist, including dependence on imported critical technologies, a shortage of skilled manpower, and complex public-private collaboration frameworks. IP rights and technology transfer barriers also hinder self-reliance. —*ANI*

PHOTO: X

Ahlawat makes a promising start in Austria

SALZBURG, 30 MAY

Indian golfer Veer Ahlawat returned an impressive three-under 67 in the opening round to be tied eighth, but Shubhankar Sharma stumbled to a three-over 73 to be placed tied 110th after the opening round of the Austrian Alpine Open presented by SalzburgerLand here. Ahlawat trailed the leader, Marcel Schneider of Germany, by four shots after the first round on Thursday. Ahlawat, who earned his DP World Tour card by topping the Indian PGTI Tour, has had a mixed season, making five cuts and missing as many in 10 starts this season.—*PTI*

Goa Challengers eye hat-trick of UTT titles

AHMEDABAD, 30 MAY

Defending champions Goa Challengers will look to extend their dominance and complete a hat-trick of titles when the sixth season of Ultimate Table Tennis, a franchise-based league, begins here on Saturday. Goa Challengers is the most successful team in the eight-team league, winning the title twice in 2023 and 2024.They defeated Chennai Lions in the 2023 final and then prevailed over Dabang Delhi TTC in the last edition's title clash. Goa Challengers boast of a strong side comprising India international Harmeet Desai, the only Gujarat player who have won back-to-back UTT titles in season 4 and 5.—*PTI*

PHOTO: X

Massimiliano Allegri returns as coach

MILAN, 30 MAY

Massimiliano Allegri was named AC Milan's new coach on Friday, charged with restoring to glory the crisis-hit team that he won Serie A with nearly 15 years ago.Allegri replaces Sergio Conceicao, who was fired on Thursday after guiding Milan to an eighth-placed finish in Serie A that left the Rossoneri out of Europe."AC Milan is pleased to announce that Massimiliano Allegri has been appointed as the head coach of the men's first team," the club said in a statement that did not include any contract details. Allegri's last two jobs were with Juventus.—*PTI*

Olympians Raiza, Naruka return to Indian team

NEW DELHI, 30 MAY

Paris Olympians Raiza Dhillon and Anantjeet Singh Naruka returned to the Indian senior team as the national shooting federation's selection committee on Friday picked the squad for the upcoming ISSF World Cup for Shotgun in Lonato, Italy. The year's fourth World Cup stage is scheduled to be held from 4 to14 July. Raiza won silver in the Junior World Cup in Suhl last week. "My sights are currently on the Lonato World Cup in July, and I hope to take confidence from my good performances this year to Italy," she said. Among those who competed in the third Nicosia Shotgun World Cup earlier this month, from where India returned with their first ever medal a bronze in the newest Olympic trap mixed team event—*PTI*

Virat will play a big role in the finals: De Villiers

RCB has never won IPL title despite reaching the finals on three occasions in the past

MULLANPUR, 30 MAY

South African batting great AB de Villiers is backing "ultimate team man" Virat Kohli to play a big hand in the IPL final and lead a multi-dimensional Royal Challengers Bengaluru outfit to its maiden title in the world's biggest T20 league.

Chasing a paltry 102, RCB crushed Punjab Kings by eight wickets in the first qualifier here on Thursday to storm into the final of the 2025 edition of the league.

One of their biggest performers this season, Kohli (12), missed out with the bat in the one-sided game. Still, his former RCB teammate De Villiers is confident the Indian superstar would fire in the title clash in Ahmedabad on June 3.

"The first time I saw him on the screen for the PBKS vs RCB game was when he got out of the bus, and I just saw a lot of focus in that guy. That's the typical body language we're so used to seeing.

"And what I love most about this is- he didn't score runs today, but we still saw him right till the end, celebrating with the batters," De Villiers told JioHotstar.

"The ultimate team man, and he looks very, very focused. The job's not done yet, but I'm very excited to watch him play. I do not doubt in my mind he's going to play a big hand in the final," the South African added.

RCB, which was one of the participating teams when the IPL began way back in 2008 with eight franchises, has never won the IPL title despite reaching the finals on three occasions in the past.

De Villiers shared his thoughts about RCB's journey and their potential to win the title this time.

"I think 2011 was a good chance to win the title. Everyone talks about the 2016 season, but let's forget about the past. Where is RCB now? In another final in 2025. It's closer than you think and smaller than you think.

"So hopefully those little moments will go in RCB's favour, come the 3rd of June. It was around the auction time when I felt like RCB got the balance right this year. It's not a one-dimensional batting line-up, not a one-dimensional bowling line-up there are options. —*PTI*

South African batting great AB de Villiers is backing "ultimate team man" Virat Kohli PHOTO: PTI

NO BETTER PLACE THAN OUT IN THE MIDDLE: HAZLEWOOD

MULLANPUR, 30 MAY

Josh Hazlewood's return to Royal Challengers Bengaluru after an injury break is a blessing for the franchise and good preparation for the Australian pacer, who says the intensity he is building up here will come in handy during the World Test Championship final against South Africa next month.

Having recovered from a shoulder injury, Hazlewood played in the IPL after a month but showed no signs of rust, helping Royal Challengers Bengaluru reach their first final since 2016 with an eight-wicket win over Punjab Kings.

The performance was also a tick mark for his preparations ahead of the World Test Championship final against South Africa, beginning at Lord's on June 11. "...I've got to be bowling, you know wherever I am in the world, I've got to be bowling getting ready for that game (WTC final) anyway," said Hazlewood after featuring in his first IPL game since April 27.

"There's no better place than I think out in the middle, obviously you've got to bowl more, more hours of training from time to time to build up for a Test, but to get that intensity right up, there's no better place than the IPL," he asserted after a brilliant haul of 3/21. —*PTI*

Kiran, Deepak enter Thailand Open finals

BANGKOK, 30 MAY

Indian boxers Kiran and Deepak advanced to the finals of the 4th Thailand Open International Boxing Tournament with convincing victories in their respective semifinal bouts here on Friday.

In the women's 75kg category, Kiran delivered a composed performance to outclass Ukraine's Polina Chernen with a 5-0 verdict. In the men's 75kg division, Deepak continued his strong run by defeating Thailand's Peerapat Yeasu, also by a unanimous 5-0 decision. —*PTI*

Rune survives 5-setter against Halys to reach fourth round

PARIS, 30 MAY

World number 10 Holger Rune had to dig deep before gritting out a 4-6 6-2 5-7 7-5 6-2 marathon victory over France's unseeded Quentin Halys at the French Open on Friday to book his spot in the fourth round.

The Dane had beaten Halys, ranked 52nd in the world, in another five-set thriller at last year's Wimbledon despite trailing by two sets, and it would not be much different this time.

Musetti comes from behind to beat Navone and reach the last 16

Now with a clear idea of what his task on court is, Italian craftsman Lorenzo Musetti overcame a sluggish start to qualify for the fourth round of the French Open with a 4-6, 6-,4 6-3, 6-2 victory against Argentine Mariano Navone on Friday. Full of confidence after reaching at least the semi-finals in all three Masters events on clay this season, eighth seed Musetti was caught off guard by his opponent early on before finding his groove on a sunlit Court Suzanne Lenglen.

Iga Swiatek maintains 24-match winning streak

Iga Swiatek has reached the 4th round of the 2025 French Open by beating Jaqueline Cristian in straight sets on Friday. Swiatek beat Cristian 6-2, 7-5. The match at Court Suzanne Lenglen saw defending champion Swiatek win her 24th match in a row at Roland Garros. Swiatek won each of the last three women's singles titles here in Paris.

Sabalenka Wins 3rd Round

The world number one star Aryna Sabalenka moved into the fourth round of the ongoing French Open, defeating Olga Danilovic in their third-round match at Paris on Friday. As per WTA's official website, Sabalenka defeated Danilovic by 6-2, 6-3 in straight sets. —*PTI*

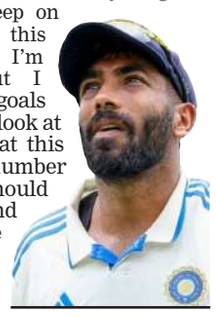
NEED TO BE SMART

It's tough to keep playing all formats: Jasprit Bumrah

BRISBANE, 7 DEC

Jasprit Bumrah is eagerly eyeing the challenge of featuring in Test matches in England, but the star India pacer admitted the difficulty of playing all three formats for a long time and said he will have to be more "selective" at some point.

While announcing the India squad for the tour of England, chief selector Ajit Agarkar had said that Bumrah might not be available for all five Test matches."It is tough for any individual to keep playing everything for so long. I've been doing it for a while, but then eventually you have to understand where your body's going, what is the important tournament," Bumrah told former Australian skipper Michael Clarke in the Beyond 23 podcast. The 31-year-old has played 45 Tests, 89 ODIs and 70 T20Is so far for the country besides appearing in 143 IPL matches for Mumbai Indians."You have to be a little selective, and you have to be a little smart about how you use your body. As a cricketer, I would never want to leave anything and always keep on going."At this moment I'm okay, but I don't set goals or I don't look at myself that this is the number that I should be at and this is the time," he added. —*PTI*



ASIAN ATHLETICS: GOLDEN BRACE FOR RECORD-BREAKING GULVEER

GUMI, 30 MAY

Long-distance runner Gulveer Singh shattered a decade-old meet record, while teenage high-jumper Pooja Singh produced a personal best performance as the duo added a couple of more gold medals to India's kitty on the penultimate day of the 26th Asian Athletics Championships here on Friday.

Gulveer etched his name among the greats of Indian long-distance running by winning a tightly-contested men's 5000m final to add to his 10,000m gold won on the opening day of the competition. The national-record-holding runner clocked 13:24.77sec to edge past Thailand's Kieran Tuntivate, who finished close behind at 13:24.97sec, while Japan's Nagiya Mori took bronze in 13:25.06sec.

The previous championship record belonged to Qatar's Mohamed Al-Garni, who had clocked 13:34.47 sec in the 2015 edition.

Later, 18-year-old Pooja jumped to a personal best of 1.89m in her penultimate attempt to finish ahead of Uzbekistan's Safina Sadullaeva (1.86m).The Haryana teen, whose father is a construction worker, has been doing well at the continental level, having earlier collected a gold at the Asian Under-23 Championships in 2023.

The win completed a remarkable double for Gulveer, who had earlier bagged gold in the 10,000m competition on the opening day with a timing of 28:38.63sec. —*PTI*

Pooja Singh and Gulveer Singh PHOTO: X / @JUMPER_POOJA_001

Sachin, Yashvir in javelin throw final

India's 4x100m men's relay team was on Friday disqualified during the preliminary round after a faulty baton exchange but Sachin Yadav and Yashvir Singh made the men's javelin throw finals alongside reigning Olympic champion Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan in the Asian Athletics Championships here. The quartet of Pranav Pramod Gaurav, Ragul Kumar Ganesh, Manikanta Hoblidhar, and Amlan Borgohain was knocked out of the competition after being found guilty of baton exchange outside the take-over zone.

Rhea takes sole lead in 7th leg of Hero WPG Tour

MYSURU, 30 MAY

Rhea Purvi Saravanan, who won her maiden Hero Women's Pro Golf Tour title this season, fired a solid two-under 68 -- the first under-par round of the seventh Leg of the tournament -- to take sole lead after the second day here on Friday.

Rhea (72, 68) was even par 140 for two days at the Jayachamaraja Wadiyar Golf Club.

The 22-year-old from Kolar, who won the opening leg, was one shot behind the three co-leaders after the first day in Mysuru.

On a day when the organisers used a shotgun start to ensure a timely finish ahead of the expected rains, Rhea started on the third with Durga Nittur and Jasmine Shekar.

Rhea picked birdies on the fifth and the seventh and one more on the 15th. Her only dropped shot came on the par-3 eighth. Amandeep Drall, with three birdies against four bogeys, added a second straight 1-over 71 and was sole second at 2-over 142 after an up-and-down day.

Amandeep had birdies on the first and the third but dropped shots on the fourth and the sixth brought her back to par. —*PTI*

Ronaldo deal in the works, says Al-Nassr chief

DUBAI, 30 MAY

Al-Nassr is negotiating with Cristiano Ronaldo over a contract extension but faces competition from a host of clubs eager to sign the five-time Ballon d'Or winner, the Saudi side's sporting director, Fernando Hierro, said on Thursday.

Speculation over the 40-year-old Portuguese forward's future intensified after Al-Nassr's season-ending match at Al-Fateh on Monday, with Ronaldo posting on social media: "This chapter is over. The story? Still being written."

Ronaldo's contract with Al-Nassr runs until June 30. We will work to renew his contract so he can continue with us, and there are many clubs interested in signing him," Hierro told a news conference.

Despite Al-Nassr failing to qualify for the Club World Cup, FIFA President Gianni Infantino said last week that discussions were underway about Ronaldo playing in the 14 June to 13 July tournament in the United States. FIFA has created a special transfer window for clubs to sign players for the event, and while Wydad Casablanca had been linked with a move for Ronaldo, a source close to the Moroccan side told Reuters last week it was not in talks to sign him. —*PTI*

NORWAY CHESS

Gukesh wins thriller against Caruana

STAVANGER, 30 MAY

Reigning world champion D Gukesh emerged the winner in a thrilling Armageddon tie-break against American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana, but Arjun Erigaisi succumbed to Magnus Carlsen's intuitive skills on a mixed day for the Indians in the 'Open' category of Norway Chess here.

World No. 3 Caruana enjoyed a pawn advantage for most of the Round 4 game against his Indian opponent, who turned 19 on Thursday, but the American could not convert it into a significant advantage in over four hours of engrossing chess thanks to Gukesh's superb defensive skills.

The Armageddon tie-break was applied to break the stalemate. Both Gukesh and Erigaisi are now tied fourth in the six-player field with 4.5 points apiece, while Carlsen is the sole leader with 8 points, followed by Caruana on 7 and American GM Hikaru Nakamura on 5.5. With Gukesh, playing with white pieces and having a huge three-minute advantage in Armageddon, white gets 10 minutes and black seven after coming out of a tricky situation during the Classical slugfest less than 15 minutes earlier, the Indian overpowered Caruana on the clock to take 1.5 points from the game.

A win in the Classical format earns the players in this double-round robin format tournament three points, while a draw fetches them one point each.

However, the players have to immediately play the Armageddon tie-break to break the deadlock. —*PTI*

D Gukesh emerged as the winner in a thrilling match against American Grandmaster Fabiano Caruana PHOTO: X / @DGUKESH